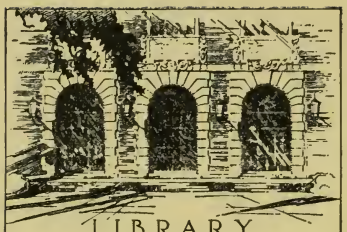

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By F. TROLLOPE,

Author of "Broken Fetters," "An Old Man's Secret," &c.

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MARRIED.

A TALE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "WONDROUS STRANGE," "KATE KENNEDY," "COMMON SENSE," ETC., ETC.

> The spacious west,
> And all the teeming regions of the south,
> Hold not a quarry to the curious flight
> Of knowledge half so tempting or so fair
> As man to man.
>
> AKENSIDE.

VOL. I.

[SECOND EDITION.]

London:
T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.
1869.

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CHAPTER I.

Say, why was man so eminently rais'd
Amid the vast creation? why ordain'd
Thro' life and death to dart his piercing eye,
With thoughts beyond the limit of his frame,
But that th' omnipotent might send him forth,
In sight of mortal and immortal pow'rs
As on a boundless theatre, to run
The great career of justice, to exalt
His gen'rous aim to all diviner deeds
To chase each partial purpose from his breast,
And thro' the mists of passion and of sense,
And thro' the tossing tide of chance and pain
To hold his course unfalt'ring, while the voice
Of Truth and Virtue up the steep ascent
Of nature calls him to his high reward,
Th' applauding smile of Heav'n.

AKENSIDE.

MARRIED.

CHAPTER I.

As I write, I hear in the distance the band playing upon the Parade—it has taken up some old dance music which recalls an epoch in my life. How happy I was when I danced to that merry tune—I do not think that a girl in the room could have been happier than I was. Let me go back and remember myself as I stood in my place that night thinking how glad, and good, and proud I ought to be, and almost heaving with the music even before it was time to begin. Memory seems to run

over, but I must reduce it to some order. Let me picture myself to myself now as I was that night—for every woman perhaps is a heroine to herself, and I certainly mean to be my own. I was dressed in that white muslin which will not wash, and which is so cheap and yet so dear because it is so soon spoiled. Three skirts, one above the other, floated round me, and gave me, I thought, something of the appearance of a Cerito. Like her I was very small, and all through life I have had to hold my head very high and to heave a little on my toes to keep up my dignity.

My very light hair—golden, flatterers called it in those days—was soft and springy, and lent itself very readily to any fashion I chose, except plain demure braids—and that night I wore it drawn back in a fluffy feathery fashion, falling behind my head almost as it willed. My ornaments were emeralds, shining, sparkling, and real, for my father, Mr. Lea, was enormously rich—a city man, with wharves

and ship loads of merchandize, Prince Lea, as I used to call him, and he could afford to give his daughters jewels. My eyes were brown, and had some expression in them I hope, expression of the ambition which was in me to be something great, nice, and good, I hardly knew what, but certainly something more genuine than a girl of fashion only.

I had no right to more attention that night than anyone else, and my sisters were taller and better looking than myself, saving only, I must say, that latent ambition to be something better and wiser, which I think belonged peculiarly to me and gave me a greater earnestness in dealing with things, and which as expressed, perhaps in my face, laid more hold of those with whom we had to do. But upon this occasion it was my birthday, and my dear father had long promised me a party on my birthday.

It had been a long promised treat, and in

his promises my father never failed, so that I wondered why he, who was accustomed to fulfil his engagements so easily, should make unusual count of this one.

"Have you seriously set your mind on this party"—he had asked me a little while before—there yet being time to keep back the scented notes of invitation. "Yes, indeed, Papa," I had answered, giving some of my earnestness as usual in that which called for no earnestness. "If I never dance again I must dance on my birthday."

"Then you shall have your party if I never give another," he had replied almost solemnly, and I had kissed him, standing on tiptoe and reaching his face with some effort.

"What a little thing you are," he had answered, "are you never going to grow any bigger?"

"I fear not," I replied, "I shall be nineteen you know on my birthday, and my dresses

have not had to be made longer for this last twelvemonth. No, Papa, you must be contented with me as I am."

"So be it," he had replied, and on my birthday morning he gave me the set of emeralds I wore that evening. I did not understand then, though I fancied I did very well afterwards, why he said, as he gave them to me, "I bought them for you three months ago and have kept them in my desk ever since." I had many other handsome presents that day—for rich people, as a rule, do get such handsome presents—but I valued none so well as this, except one, which I shall come to presently. My sisters gave me each a dark bracelet made of their hair, and Mamma made me a present of a sweet new pink satin dress, soft and shining, but with it she had said

"My Alice, will I hope, be more fortunate, than her sisters—we ought long ere this to have had a marriage in the family."

"And is the pink satin to be my bridal

robe, mamma," I answered demurely, "or only the net by which the unwary bird is to be snared."

"You should say the wary bird," laughed mamma—who never troubled herself enough about matters to be fairly charged with being a worldly mother—"for your papa could make the fortune of three sons-in-law."

I had blushed then almost to the hue of the soft shining dress I was handling with such dainty admiration, and I thought would he, I wonder, make the fortune of Brice Glynn.

"I think indeed," she said, fondly smoothing my hair, "that he would like that even better then your marrying rich men, he would feel them to be more his sons; and then, you know, as he helps to make their fortunes, they would not as rich men might, reflect on his origin. Though we are so well off now, Alice, you must never forget that your papa began life as the son of a poor country doctor."

"The son of a poor gentleman, mamma, need never be ashamed of his origin."

"No dear, but great vain men expect such pedigrees, and papa is weak upon that point; I thought, dear, what I had said would make you glad."

She then was also thinking of Brice Glynn, and there was a tender flush like to mine upon my mother's pale cheek, as passing her hand once more over my hair she left me to my thoughts. I loved Brice Glynn—I knew I loved him—but I would not tell myself so in words. He was only a clerk to a merchant, earning—he had told me so once—his two hundred a year; and he had never said to me a word of love. Yet I was very certain he loved me. In my riches, surrounded by my nice presents, and feeling so secure of the world, I could not doubt he loved me; he belonged to me as much as all my birthday riches. Even while I sat thinking, and making the pink satin fall into fresh

folds, our maid—mine and my sisters'—came up to me with a silver salver, on which rested one white rose-bud—yellow white—longing to burst into full flower, and surrounded by leaves even yet damp with morning dew.

"For you, Miss Alice," my maid said, "with Mr. Glynn's best love."

"Not love," I said, laughing, for I knew how much easier that word was for her to remember than the ceremonious message which I felt sure she ought to have delivered.

"Leastways, he meant love, whatever he said," she replied, decidedly, "but now I think of it, it was compliments."

"It is safer to remember what people do say," I said, with an appearance of indifference, which I thought very successful, but which I feel sure now did not deceive her a bit.

When she was gone, I made up for my simulated indifference, I put my rose-bud to my lips and made much of it, caressing it as

much as I dared; it was so sweet, and it was such a romantic thing for my strong lover to have thought about doing, that I forgot all about the merchant's office in the dull city, and the two hundred a year, and only remembered what a manly, dear, good, big fellow he was.

CHAPTER II.

Ah! 'tis like a tale of olden
Time long, long ago;
When the world was in its golden
Prime, and Love was lord below!
Every vein of Earth was dancing
With the Spring's new wine!
'Twas the pleasant time of flowers
When I met you, love of mine!

GERALD MASSEY.

CHAPTER II.

Brice Glynn had never said a word of love to me, but he had made love to me all the same. The first time I saw him he came to a party at aunt Bona's. Aunt Bona was a Savoyard, and had married an uncle of mine who had died and left her, when very young, a widow, but she loved his relatives, and attached herself so much to his family, that I think we all forgot that the tie was only one of marriage. I had spent much of my time with her, and I think it was from her that I learned to look so earnestly on life; I

remember that on that evening she had invited my sisters and myself to tea, and that we found the room full of girls when we arrived. We were in demi-toilet, but of course had all tried each in our several ways to make ourselves look bewitching, and there we were without a single gentleman, not even the white-haired clergyman of aunt Bona's Swiss Protestant Church, to which she was accustomed to give all the spare cash she possessed.

This would have been tolerable if we had been invited to an American quilting party or an English Dorcas, for with a needle and thread a woman can get through anything; or if aunt Bona had been alone and we could have told her all our gossip, which of course we could not before the three Miss Bennetts, the two Miss Fishers, and the middle aged Mrs. Comfit. As it was we had no work, and we felt it all the more because little Miss Ashwood had been wiser than ourselves and

had brought her tatting. We should have known what aunt Bona's parties were like, and have provided accordingly, but we were like silly birds in those days, easily snared and never wide awake enough for our own protection.

We had each sung our song and played our piece of music and gone into raptures over each other's performances, and had come to that part of the evening which is a long way after tea and before supper, and every moment hung so heavily that between each sentence we could hear the ticking of the old-fashioned clock upon the stairs, then dear Mrs. Comfit came to the rescue by saying—

"Why not have a dance this cold night, I can play if you will put up with my old-fashioned tunes."

Had she proposed that we should descend to the scullery and scour the pots, the idea would have been welcome after the martyrdom we had severally been suffering, and we

began dancing with eager feet; I always liked dancing, it is to women what cricket, and boating, and swimming, and hunting are to men, and I sometimes fancy that if young people had more at home without being forced to seek it so much abroad, it would be better for them—for men I mean, for of course, we must have it respectably, or not at all,—the more lordly sex are not always guarded by such scruples as rule us.

Any way we danced that night, not only the approved quadrille and waltz, but Scotch reels, and all the old school dances we could remember. I was dancing a reel with Annie Ashford and Miss Fisher—and old-fashioned as her tunes might be, Mrs. Comfit played beautifully, and in perfect time. My hair had fallen, I fancy, a little out of place, and my colour was high with exercise, for we were determined to keep up as long as possible, when, in one of my changings of sides, I happened to look at the door, and there, standing

between the door-posts, and leaning against one of them, was "a man."

I wrote the word carelessly, but I go back to give it additional emphasis; for certainly Brice Glynn was never better described than as a man. It was his glory that he was emphatically a man—something which no philosopher has yet been able to define, failed to make him a fine gentleman; but nature had given to him all those manly qualities which we women so often worship. Broad shouldered, and with a large open chest; he was yet but just above the middle height. His brown hair curled over his head in abundant rings—and if curling hair is a sign of determination, I think it spoke truly resting on Brice's massive head. His feet and hands were well proportioned, but not so small as to be a beauty—indeed, his hands were rather firm and long, but his countenance was even more manly than his figure, full as it was of capability and intellect, and

of that something which is beyond both, in its noble power of distancing others and preserving the quiet, calm dignity of authority. His mouth was arched like Cupid's bow, and was, even before his masterly eyes, the finest feature he possessed.

So strong—so very strong he looked, standing there against the door-post, looking at me with calm, admiring eyes, admiring—it might be—as he would the even footsteps of a clever and graceful child.

I stopped with sudden shyness, dropped a curtsey to my partner, and looked enquiringly at Aunt Bona.

"Mr. Glynn," she answered, introducing him, "has come to me on a little business, and I have persuaded him to stay to supper."

How could we help making much of him. I think I flattered him quite as much as every one else did, and when he joined us and begged us to continue our dancing, I felt that he was in the situation of Paris, and would be

throwing his apple to whomsoever he asked to be his partner.

What did it matter that his boots were muddy, and his ancles splashed. If he had been forced to dance in pattens, or on stilts, he would have been acceptable; and I fancy that we each thought that the bit of ribbon, or special ring or bracelet, wherein our finery for the evening most consisted, had not been put on quite for nothing. The Miss Fishers looked a little supercilious, but then, we knew the eldest was all but engaged, and the younger had just rejected an offer from an elderly admirer of seventy-five.

He asked me to dance, and I, flattered, took my place, with laughing, joyous eyes; but I said nothing—not a word, I think, during all that quadrille, except to tell him that we had made steps imperative that night.

"Very well," he said; "then I must try and remember mine, only it is such a long time ago since I learned."

A long time ago, and the first flush of earliest manhood was still upon his face, like the bloom which we tremble to see disturbed upon a plum—long ago—what affectation, and he, in his glorious youth, which, when modestly worn is, in itself, a gift and a possession.

When that quadrille was done, he asked if I would dance a reel with him. It was selfish. I should have passed him on ; and Annie Ashnorth and Miss Fisher knew the reel steps so well ; but the temptation was too strong for me, and when we all began to dance I was contented. He seemed quite at home with Aunt Bona, which surprised me a little; but then, she always made her own friends independently of us, and we often met strangers at her house, which fact, perhaps, accounted for the handsome demi-toilet we were accustomed to wear at her tea table.

I know my eyes sparkled. I know I was happy; why I could not tell, but I have learnt

since that to be very happy in the society of others means that we love them more or less. I was accustomed to be petted and flattered, so that I did not really think much of his asking me in preference to all the others. He moved well, and when his arms were crossed upon his broad chest, he looked so strong, and so at ease, even while he kept time and tune as agilely as I did.

"Thank you," he said, at last. "I fear you are tired; come and sit down."

Dear Brice, even from that first hour of our coming together, he was kind and careful of me.

He pulled forward a low chair, and brought out a stool for my wearied feet, and then he turned to talk to Mrs Comfit, who knew him well it seemed, though by a look, or a word now and then, he shewed that he had not forgotten my existence.

CHAPTER III.

Ask Orient gems,
Diamonds and sapphires, in rich caskets, wrought
By cunning goldsmiths: sigh for rarest birds
Of farthest Ind, like winged flowers, to flit
Around thy stately bower; and, at a wish,
The precious toys shall wait thee.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

CHAPTER III.

From that night I saw a great deal of Brice Glynn. Girls, and even women of some experience, often fall into the notion that sometimes opportunity only is wanting to make a little liking ripen into a great attachment. But if men have a real liking in them how easily they can make opportunities—how quickly they do make them. Brice made all his—he never put me to the pains of making one—he might have tempted me to try, for I am just as weak as my neighbours, only he never gave me time or necessity to exercise that

poor talent, which when women do possess it is so thrown away and useless. I met him at Mrs. Comfit's evening party, and at many other houses. I must note here that though we were rich and had some titled friends and some few opportunities of marrying into the ranks of the nobility, had they or we been so minded, yet that though we had grown so very rich we had faithfully kept all our old friendships. Therefore though we sometimes gave special little dinners on plate to our new acquaintance, the greater part of our social visiting was with our old friends. For this reason it was not at all to be wondered at that the clever, manly, merchant's clerk should often meet us.

At a second party at Mrs. Comfit's, a dinner, to which my young self was not admitted, Brice made papa's acquaintance, and he, being always kind to young beginners in the life through which he had so successfully struggled, asked him home to dinner. At that dinner

dear mamma fell in love with him altogether. It must be remembered that she had no sons, though she so much desired them, and that such a well-behaved young man as Brice appeared to her in almost a tender aspect.

From that time—if he had any difficulty before—he had none in finding opportunities of seeing me.

I knew he liked me—how could I help knowing it when he singled me out on every occasion—but he never said so. He lent me books, brought me choice flowers to copy, for I was fond of making them in wax, helped me out if I came to a difficulty in German, or if I chanced on any more abstruse study, was always ready to give me his assistance, or even to work up the subject if he previously knew nothing of it.

Measuring myself by his mind, so deep, and yet so ready, I came then to think that I had made a false calculation of myself, and that, after all, I was but a weak, vain girl, with

only one spark of true earnestness to save me from being a trifler.

Sometimes, and on very rare occasions, I did think he meant to tell me he loved me, and would like to link my life to his, but something always restrained him. Then I used to remember that I was rich and that he was poor, and that he could not tell what a large-hearted man my father was, and that to see a child of his happy he would have taken a great lump of his own wealth, and blessed us both with it. He would not woo me rich, and I honoured him for the thought, and still more that I rejoiced to see that my power was great enough to prevent his leaving me alone. It was a pleasure to me to receive him in our noble drawing-rooms—so large that six couples might have carried on conversations without being heard by each other. It was very delightful to cast about me as it were the evidences of our riches, to put upon my small person the cost of more than a quarter

of his income, to make myself very dainty with my gew-gaws, and pretty finery, not knowing that every new thing I wore in my extravagance to bewitch him, put further and further away from him the possibility of making me his wife.

He saw this very evidently, but I did not; a little more adornment, a new comb, a more bewitching wreath, or lovelier dress I thought would finish making mine the dear heart which so evidently tottered in its balance, and must so soon fall over on my side.

I did not know how it all teased him, or I think, painful as it would have been, I would have dressed myself like the nut-brown maid. As it was, when his eye contemplated my new dresses so sedately sometimes, I could not help seeing so disapprovingly—I would soon find occasion to change them for others still more fashionable and costly.

Sometimes he would stay away for a long

time, a whole fortnight or three weeks, for our intimacy had so grown, our friendship, for so we termed it, so increased, that these intervals seemed very long, and then his resolution, I suppose, giving way, he would return more my friend than ever.

"If a man does not like you enough to come forward in six months," said older and wiser Lucy, my sister, "he never will, depend upon that, Alice."

"So that he keeps my friend," I said in sincerity, "I do not care whether he comes forward or not."

"Friendships are dangerous, dear," she said fondly, "other people call them by a softer name, look on you as another man's property, and so pass you by."

"They are welcome, I do not want them," I said, thinking what other could come in the place of Brice. From my sister's remark it will readily be seen that we were by no means a worldly family.

"Does he never say he loves you," she continued teasingly, "never in those long explanations of German which I think he learned on purpose."

"Not he," I said laughing; "he went once to Germany for a year."

"Oh, you do know so much about him? To me he is a dear, delightful myth, with no history before the time he suddenly appeared at Aunt Bona's."

"He is very reserved for a man with such a simple heart," I said, thoughtfully. Lucy and Meta and mamma and my dear father were always so kind and tender to me that they did not know how jealous I was in reality—jealous even of Brice's profound reticence of manner. Much as I liked him, I could not get over that; and yet he was a man of whom it was impossible—quite—quite impossible to ask impertinent questions.

One day I said to him, when he had been absent longer than usual—

"Have you been very busy, Mr. Glynn?"

"Not more than usual," he replied, looking perhaps a little startled.

"Then why did you stay away so long?" I asked, raising my eyes, which had been fixed upon my wax flowers, rather suddenly to his face.

He flushed all up to his manly forehead.

"Have you wanted me?" he said, anxiously.

"Of course I have, a hundred times," I replied. "I wanted you to choose me a carnation to copy, and then Lucy thinks you can take the second to a new song she has been practising."

"I would have come at any time if she had sent for me."

"Ah!" I said, doubtfully.

"You do not believe me?"

"Your friendship is very intermittent."

"No, you mistake me altogether," he said, quickly; "but I do wrong to come here—you know I do."

"We do not keep a gambling house," I answered, meekly; "and if we play a round game, it is never for more than two-pence a dozen."

He laughed a little bitterly.

"So," I pursued, "I do not quite see what harm there is in coming here. I did want a carnation so badly."

He was looking at me very persistently. I knew pretty well that my few words had made him lose his self-possession; and I was rich, and I could make his fortune, was I so very bold.

"Alice," he said, laying his strong sinewy hand on mine; "do you mean what you seem to say?"

"I mean nothing, but that you are very tiresome, Mr. Glynn; but now you shall stay and try the song—I know Lucy is dying for

a second," and with that I sprang lightly to the door and went after my sister. I left him with his face upon his hands, in very piteous fashion—the strong man was having a struggle with himself, I knew ; but weak and petted as I might be, I was not the kind of woman who could take the advantage of any man's hour of weakness. So I went very swiftly after Lucy, and when I had brought her and had put them both at the piano, I sat very demurely down to my wax flowers, and quite refused to see that he was looking at me.

In his sober reason—with all his calm, cool judgment about him—I thought he should ask me to be his wife if he wanted me. What pretty boon had ever been denied me? Why then should not Brice love me, and want me very, very much to be his wife ? and this thought made my dreams very happy, though I seemed to be giving all my thoughts to the pretty wild prim roses I was so carefully moulding.

CHAPTER IV.

Then, thrilling to the harp's gay sound,
So sweetly rung each vaulted wall,
And echoed light the dancer's bound,
As mirth and music cheered the hall.

SCOTT.

Divinely through the graceful dance,
You seemed to float in silent song,
Bending to earth that beamy glance,
As if to light our steps along!

MOORE.

Music arose with its voluptuous swell
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which speak again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell;

BYRON.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE days after this meeting came my birthday, and now he had sent me the pretty yellow white rose, which was longing to burst into flower. It had come in the early morning, with the dew still upon it—the sweet fresh dew of the night. Surely it was an emblem that he was approaching me at last, not after his spasmodic fashion, and with tenderness into which he seemed betrayed unwillingly—but as I had wished, with his sober judgment in my favour—that sober

judgment which makes the cold-mannered Englishman the best husband in the world.

That was why, though I prized my emeralds and my pink satin dress, and the dear bracelets, with my sisters' hair in them; yet that I thought more of my rose-bud than of any of the rich presents that graced my birthday.

I had taken care that everyone in whom my sisters took any interest should be asked to my ball, and we were determined to be as happy as we could be.

There was a certain Mr. Bell Norton whom Lucy felt some kindness for, who was there with the rest. He was middle-aged and rich, and had fascinated Lucy, because he could talk so cleverly, and could draw about him such a set of lions. I thought he was then upon the eve of coming forward to her, and she would have made him an admirable wife; but mamma was in her heart afraid of him, and never, I think, could have learned to call him son. Papa, though he

was rather proud of Mr. Bell Norton's attention to his daughter, took more kindly to Brice. He had made his own fortune—his own road in life, and I think had a weakness for things of his own making. So that he would very much like pushing the fortune of his own son-in-law. To a man of his extreme energy, and so great a lover of work—something more to do—one of Alexander's unconquered worlds to master, would have been worth something; for he was always generous, and the idea of settling down to a Sybarite life was not after his mind at all. He was lavish in his expenditure; but it was always for the pleasure of others rather than for himself. Careless, perhaps, he was liable to be easily hoodwinked, but indomitable in his energy, endurance, and industry. Idleness had no power or temptation for him. But for myself, I liked Mr. Bell Norton and had quite set my heart upon his coming forward to Lucy. To brotherless girls, brothers-in-law naturally

rise in value, and I was a little vexed to find how independent Lucy would be with her cavalier. It was not my way with Brice, I had none of the elements of the coquette in me, and could not bear to hurt him. But Lucy did not seem to care, and perhaps this manner succeeded with Mr. Norton, for he followed her very persistently.

That night his manner was more impressive, and I, at least, felt persuaded as I watched them pacing the long room together, that he was talking of their mutual future. Lucy, with her dark brown hair, was dressed in blue silk, and her white rounded arm resting upon his coat sleeve looked doubly white. For once I could perceive that she had put aside her look of calm indifference and seemed disposed to meet his overtures in a meek and seemly spirit.

I was delighted, so much so as almost to forget the programme of my own life, which was, perhaps, about to take so serious a turn,

and when Brice came up to me I was ready to converse in all friendly confidence, and happy self forgetfulness, but I was too much at leisure from myself to think much about the depth of my own feelings or his. I was always happy with Brice.

"If I wanted to paint a picture of happiness," he said, "I should choose you."

"I am very happy," I replied, glancing at Lucy and Mr. Bell Norton. As it happened his glance followed mine, and then our eyes met. His eyes had grown accustomed to talk with mine and I could understand them quite well.

"They are quite friends," I said, answering his look.

"Nothing more?" he asked.

"Oh! dear no," I said, for I felt that I had no right to speak out my hopes.

"He is a man who stands very well in the world," said Brice.

"Yes, and he is very well off. Papa says

he gives excellent dinners and keeps a much better cook than we do."

"So I have heard," he said, rather gloomily.

"You are not jealous of Mr. Norton," I said reprovingly; "men always get rich when they are middle aged; youth is the time for self denial and struggling, without a little rough wind the tree would never grow so straight."

"You have had a great deal of rough wind," he said, ironically glancing at my pretty dress, dainty satin shoes, and flashing emeralds.

"You need not be cross," I answered, "I daresay I could have met with a great deal of rough wind, only I get out of the way of it. I am so fond of the sunshine."

"So it seems," he said, with another glance which seemed to take in all my frivolous surroundings.

"Well, do you know I think it is a great

trial to be rich when one is not born in the purple, unless you are very humble indeed, you meet with so many rebufs and disappointments. For instance, how unhappy we might be because Mr. Bell Norton always succeeds in giving better dinners than we do, and mamma says it is such a trouble having to think so much about it, that it is only after all, like being an upper servant to society."

Brice laughed.

"Nevertheless," he said, "I mean to be rich some day, and I hope my wife will not grumble."

"We must all take our trials patiently," I said demurely, feeling all the time that a laugh was stealing out of the corners of my eyes.

"You call it a trial do you," he replied, heeding perhaps the suppressed light of my eyes more than my words.

"Oh! dreadful, fancy having always to

remember when the things are not in season in order that you may have the luxury of buying them at the highest price."

"I had forgotten that."

"And then," I went on, "having to entertain your servants, to remember who can eat pork and who objects to cold meat, to see that their rooms are kept in order and all their whims remembered on penalty of receiving notice of dismissal as their mistress, why really it must be almost as bad as keeping boarders or letting lodgings."

"Yet you seem to enjoy it."

"Oh! yes, we take things easily, do not strain after appearances, and leave Mr. Bell Norton to give better dinners, and then you see mamma is such a patient good manager; but I do hear such complaining from some people in the drawing-room before the gentlemen come up sometimes that I begin to fancy Robinson Crusoe's trials must have been light compared with theirs."

"Still you have things all your own way."

"Yes, pretty much, but why do you ask?" I added, changing my tone to one of greater earnestness, and badinage was I knew not my forte, "do I ever complain?"

"Never, but then you have no cause."

"No, I have no cause, with such a home as mine, such a father and mother and such sisters, I have certainly no cause for complaint."

"You would find poverty a very bitter pill to swallow."

"Should I? but then you know there is a text which says that the rich should rejoice when they are brought low. Perhaps such diversities and changes are good for us."

"They are very hard," he said, looking at me, perhaps my white muslin which one dip into the washing tub would so utterly have ruined did not make me look very fit to rough the world.

"Ah! but what one values most in life," I said, kindling with enthusiasm "is nobility of soul, and in order to reach it I would cheerfully go through any teaching Providence might deem wisest, any hardship so that I might attain it."

"What do you mean by nobility of soul?" he asked, partly I think because he liked to hear me talk of things with all my heart in my face.

"Oh! is it not," I answered, "to feel almost a divine care for our fellows in the struggle of life, to rejoice with them in their success without a particle of envy, to be so glad when they are glad, so sorry when they are in trouble, and to feel almost a mortal grief for our own sins and shortcomings, I should so like to be good, and I would take any education, however hard, which would make me so."

His lips parted with a smile.

"I, too, should like," he said, "to be some-

thing akin to your picture. Why is it that we may not help each other to attain it?"

My eyes fell, and I felt the hot blood stealing up to my face—I knew he was looking at me—weak, foolish girl as I was, I knew he must see even by my kindling colour that the cherry he was longing for needed but a touch to fall into his hand; then he said, slowly:

"Poverty is a hard educator—I am not sure that it is not a curse. Shall we waltz?"

They were playing that then new waltz which the band just now played upon the parade, and soon I felt myself all happy, but confused, resting upon his arm amidst the subdued whirl of many dancers.

CHAPTER V.

Juliet. * * * Sweet, good night!
This bud of love, by summer's ripening breath,
May prove a beauteous flower when next we meet,
Good night, good night! as sweet repose and rest
Come to thy heart as that within my breast!
Romeo. O, wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied?
Juliet. What satisfaction canst thou have to night?

SHAKSPEARE.

CHAPTER V.

It was a very happy ball—even now going over all its little episodes, I think it was the most pleasant I ever attended. Brice, too, was so kind—if he was not dancing with me, he was yet ready to welcome me with a smile whenever the dance was finished. But the sunniest hours must end, and the room was thining fast when he came to take leave of me; people were hurrying off to the cloak room, anxious, doubtless, to avoid the fearful ignominy of being the last to say good-night, as we stood a little aside near the door, and

yet removed from the stream of well-dressed guests who were trying so hard not to seem in any ill-mannered haste.

"I shall not see you again for three weeks," he said, standing by me, and lingering over his leave taking.

"Three weeks!" I repeated, a little inclined to take offence.

"I am going to Prussia on business, and I think it will take so long. I ought to have gone to-day, but I begged off until to-morrow, or rather this morning."

"I hope you will have a nice journey," I said, with cheerfulness, stifling back my tears; for I was tired, and the long and happy evening had over-excited me.

"I have just been offered a better appointment in St. Petersburgh," he said, "but I have not the courage to accept it."

"No!" I said, as heartlessly as I could; "are you afraid of the wolves?"

"Would you like me to go?" he asked,

fixing his eyes upon my face, and I sadly fear taking in with his keen glance, even the tears which I hoped were so cleverly suppressed.

"Yes, if it would be better for you—if you would be happier," I said, firmly, but even as I spoke I drew the rose bud he had given me from amongst the pretty folds of my dress, and began tearing it to pieces with slow and trembling fingers. I was always so terribly in earnest even in my anger.

There fell a little silence, while he watched my two significant fingers at their remorseless work, but he never attempted to stay me.

"You are angry at my going, or thinking of going, rather," he said, and his voice was very husky; "but it is my staying which really is the offence. You know I ought never to see you again—what is the use? how is it to end?"

He was so evidently in earnest that my anger vanished like a summer cloud, and

throwing aside my now leafless stem, I turned to him teasingly.

"Have you, then, committed murder, or forgery, or are you married to some poor girl whom you are keeping in strict confinement? or have you some dreadful secret in holding?"

"And if I were married what would it matter?" he answered, passionately, almost peevishly.

"Nothing at all," I said, a little struck by his manner; "only it would not be right to conceal it."

"No; but except that it would not be right, it would not matter, would it—would it?" he added, almost fiercely, and looking with a curious, almost wild, questioning into my eyes.

As he lost his self-possession I regained mine; in a minute more I could have learned from his lips that declaration which his eyes, his quivering mouth, his whole manner told

me: but not so does a true English girl choose to be won—not so would she betray her lover into speech against his better judgment. I knew that my eyes were clear, that my lately changing face was now cold and pale; and turning to his impassioned glance my now firm, and calm, and yet kindly eye, I looked him full in the face, as I held out my hand.

"Good-night, Mr. Glynn, if you have really to start to-day; you ought to be getting a little sleep; you will be sadly tired, I fear."

He stooped then and picked up the stem of the rose which I had thrown down.

"I will keep this," he said, gloomily; "it will be a useful reminder."

"Will it?" I answered, gaily; "I think you had better resist the temptation. You will be tempted when in Prussia to boast of it as a trophy."

"A poor trophy!" he said, looking at me.

"A trophy of the wilfulness of English girls when they are threatened with the loss of their friends. I hope the Russian appointment is really worth having."

"I have declined it—I—your kind—I have not strength of mind to leave," he hesitated; and I added:

"England, no, if I were a man I would certainly rather work my way here than any where else. There is no country which admits of a greater rise or presents freer competition."

By this time, and while I was making this little speech, which neither heeded, I am sure, he had been able to recover himself; to be again the calm self-reliant man I admired so much and liked so well, so that I could say now, without much harm, as he again bade me good bye—

"I am so sorry you are going, be sure to come and see us directly you come back."

Though I would not let him win me against

his better judgment, still I could not quite forget that I was rich and he was poor, and that papa could make his fortune. Then he pressed my hand and bade me good night with his husky voice, and joined the dispersing crowd on its hurried way to the cloak room.

There had been some pain in this little conversation, but not enough to cast back a shadow upon that pleasant evening.

As I stood upon tiptoe, making believe to be very tall, that I might kiss the dear, dear father whom I so fondly loved, I could tell him still in all truth that it was the happiest party I had ever had in my life, and that he was the best, and kindest, and dearest of fathers, as that I was the happiest and most grateful of daughters.

And then as I went up to bed, very tired indeed, but with a little elasticity still left in me, I could look back with satisfaction and forward with hope.

Brice was poor, and therefore diffident, but I was rich, and I knew I had given him enough hope to live upon even through three weeks in a foreign land.

As I lay awake, listening to the twittering of the sparrows, and the occasional awakening of some more melodious bird; watching the sun rise above the houses which bordered the common, I felt very happy, and wondered why men talked in sermons and in books of the unsatisfactory nature of human happiness, rather did I feel a joyous gratitude as in my gladness I murmured softly to myself—

> "If thus thy minor works be fair—
> If thus Thy goodness gilds the span
> Of ruined earth and sinful man;
> How glorious must those mansions be
> Where thy redeemed shall dwell with Thee."

CHAPTER VI.

Wealth and the high estate of pride,
With what untimely speed they glide,
How soon depart!
Bid not the shadowy phantoms stay,
The vassals of a mistress they,
Of fickle heart.

These gifts in Fortune's hands are found;
Her swift revolving wheel turns round,
And they are gone!
No rest the inconstant goddess knows,
But changing, and without repose,
Still hurries on.

LONGFELLOW.

CHAPTER VI.

I LIKE to linger in memory over my birthday party, because it was part of my happy youth, and because at that time no cloud had been discovered by our young eyes to be upon the horizon of our comfortable life; but I think the happy time ended with the light slumber into which I fell after daybreak.

That day when we all met for a late breakfast, all except papa, who had gone at his accustomed hour to the City, I could see that Lucy was happily pre-occupied, and that sometimes amidst this pre-occupation a slight

but radiant blush of maidenly joy would steal up over her pale face, and she would seem to smile at the reflection of her own thoughts.

During that morning I know mamma asked her some questions about Mr. Bell Norton, but Lucy would say nothing, and yet it was evident to us all that through the day she was expectant of something which did not happen. At last she confessed to us that Mr. Norton had said at parting, and with a manner which at the moment at least had led but to one conclusion, that he would see her again that day.

"I think he was wise to stay away and have his sleep instead," said mamma, yawning, as the evening drew on.

We had been sitting all day in our small breakfast room, while the servants were busy putting the other rooms to rights, and a call from our grand and fashionable friend would in reality have caused us some discomfort, but

I shall not easily forget the look of uneasiness which gradually spread itself over my dear Lucy's countenance. I could guess that many times before Mr. Bell Norton's manner had been expressive and impressive, that he had often approached the subject of his affection, but that hitherto Lucy had held her own, had shewn him but scant love and much indifference, but that this once she had give way and let him see into her heart. Therefore, the mortification was the greater. Some girls play as it might be an open game, risking their hearts upon every poor chance of getting rid of them, but this had not been the case with Lucy. Timid, but indifferent to all seeming, she was one who thought long before she came to any decision, and was not easily moved by the vanity of conquest. She had needed a long and persistent siege, and now that she had lowered her flag, the conqueror should have entered the citadel with triumph and rejoicing, shewing that the conquest was very

dear to him, and that to plant his standard on the walls was an act of glory which he would hasten to achieve.

All that day people's cards and kind messages kept coming in, and at last, when it was near dinner time, a groom came up to the door and left his master's card—"Mr. Bell Norton."—What was the meaning of that? "He has remembered that it would not be etiquette to come in to-day," I said to mamma, not to Lucy, her face was turned away, and presently she left the room.

But we soon forgot Mr. Bell Norton, at least I did, when papa came home to dinner. The dining room had been made ready by this time, for the master was always much considered in our establishment, and the cut-glass and polished silver glittered on the white cloth in the usual comfortable state which it pleased us to keep it.

But never before at that board had the dear master's face looked so ghastly pale. Mamma

whispered something about last night's lobster salad, but I knew myself very well that it was not that. Once I saw him in the silent intervals of the dinner caused by our concealed anxiety, take up one of the costly spoons, and sway it on his finger, as if testing its weight.

Poor father, what a tide of bitter thought must have coursed through his mind before he fell upon this simple act.

At last the dinner was over, and the servants had left the room, after placing before us the delicate dessert, which as it bloomed upon the table seemed to tell of our stability and our wealth.

Then papa leaned back in his chair, placed his hand to his head, and seemed to think.

"What is it, papa," said mamma anxiously, "has the supper upset you, dear, I always feel so afraid of lobster at night."

Then he roused himself, and almost smiled.

"No," he said, "it was not my supper but my breakfast which upset me."

"Your breakfast! You eat so little breakfast ever, I thought that little *paté* could not have hurt you."

"I allude to my breakfast in the City," said papa, with a smile, which faded instantly. "When I got there this morning I found that Stedman had gone off."

Stedman was Papa's partner.

"Papa, dear, does it hurt you very much," I asked, interrupting the dreadful silence which followed by drawing my chair up close to his. I remembered his action with the spoon, and from that I augured the worst.

"I fear it does," he answered calmly, "I have been at the accounts all day, but the further I go the worse I find them. Poor fellow, he has done very wrong. I did not know that he had a share in some theatre, I forget where, though I heard to-day. I

have been suspicious of the accounts lately, and had fixed to go over them to-day. He took time by the forelock and went last night while we were dancing."

"William, are we ruined?" asked mamma, leaning forward.

"I cannot tell yet," he said, very tenderly, "but I thought it better to mention this."

"Of course," she said, eagerly, "there is nothing so bad as concealment."

"I should have sent for Brice Glynn," said my father, "for I do not know a cleverer hand at accounts, but he told me he was going somewhere to-day."

My heart gave a bound at this praise of my friend.

"Is this news known?" asked Lucy. Papa looked at her, I thought, with peculiar softness, as he answered—

"It must be all over the City to-day, and to-morrow all our claims will be in upon us. Never mind, old woman," he said, suddenly

addressing my poor pale mother, who sitting at the head of her dinner table, daily looked so well, and who, I firmly believe, dressed with all a girl's interest to keep still charming in his eyes. "Never mind, we came up hill together, and it is odd if we cannot go down. Thank God," he added fervently, "it has not broken me," and he felt his forehead as if he could test his brain that way.

"I am thankful, William," answered my poor mother, "to see you so good; but things may be better than you think."

"We will hope to save something," said my father; "and now I do not mind anything—having to tell was the worst of all."

"We have always been such friends," said Lucy, hopefully, "you should not mind telling us, papa."

"Papa knows we think most of him," said Meta, "and after all it is but a bore to be so very rich."

"But if it comes to being so very poor?"

said he who reigned among us like a royal ruler.

I laid my head on his shoulder ; we seemed to need to come very close together in this sore trouble ; for such I knew it to be in spite of the brave faces round me. I could not bear to look at my mother, with her fair round arms, she seemed to wear her health so meekly and so well. It was a summer night, and the large chandelier usually made the room over warm, and yet I shivered as I moved close to my dear, generous father. He, a poor man, a very poor man, how could I think of it.

It was a Spartan duty with us not to cry, but I could not help trembling from head to foot. He put his arm round me, for I had never lost the privilege of my babyhood, or been eclipsed by a younger child ; he drew me close to him as he stooped his noble head to kiss me. I felt an awful thing upon my face, it was a

strong man's tear, my own father's upon my cheek.

I could not bear that, and I sprang from the room to seek some dark place where I could weep alone, and at my own free will.

CHAPTER VII.

The patron (sir, ye maun forgi'e me,
I winna lie, come what will o' me),
On ev'ry hand it will allowéd be
He's just—nae better than he should be.

BURNS.

CHAPTER VII.

I CREPT back presently, having resumed my calmness, stilled my trembling, and dried my tears. I found them all more brave than myself, sitting in cheerful discourse over the day's disaster; and I could not help remembering my own observation to Brice that there must be truth in the text, "Let the rich man rejoice when he is brought low." I could see a little of that rejoicing on my father's brow. I could discern something of the joy of the strong man who hears the din of combat and rushes to the fight.

As I took my place by his side, he drew me close to him again, and whispered.

"Never mind, pet, calamity always seems to me to open Heaven."

They were simple words, but they brought before me a noble vision of one, who, sleeping upon the hard ground, with a stone for a pillow, saw the angels ascend and descend by their golden ladder.

"I will try not to mind," I answered, "I am sure I shall not if you do not."

But I knew all this time that I was weak, and they seemed all so strong. Meta told me, long afterwards, that she wondered at my fortitude; she had felt it as much as I did, only she looked so strong. I think we loved each other so sincerely that we had no thought of our own immediate griefs, and this band of strong love sustained us all.

"The servants must be immediately discharged, and the house all but closed," said my father, as we stood together before we parted for the night.

Lucy started and turned pale. I fear that she must have regretted that her friend had not called that day, and that to-morrow he would find things so changed. She must have known how dear appearances were in the eyes of Mr. Bell Norton, and how our wealth had been suffered to cover our want of noble relatives. The rubicon passed he would not have broken his troth or fouled his honour by a vow violated; but how would it be with him now? The to-morrows, changed as they were, must tell that.

We took leave of each other almost brightly, for, after all, trouble is not an unmitigated evil, and being so rich, and having nothing whatever which we were forced to do, made our position, as Meta had said, rather a bore. There was excitement, at least, in coming difficulty, and young people like excitement.

We met again at breakfast with a cheerfulness which was wonderful to witness; for it must be remembered that as yet poverty was

quite an unknown world to us ; a kind of Arcadia ; and, more than this, I think we had not been spoiled by wealth.

" So," said my father, as he looked round his breakfast table with a well-pleased smile, " we are all going to do our duty without grumbling; is it not so ?"

We all gave an eager assent.

" That is right," he said, standing to drink his last cup of tea, " then God will go with us, and we will show that with him there is nothing so very bad after all."

He left us with these words, and though I accompanied him to the door, as was my custom, and watched him take his place in his brougham, nothing more passed between us.

We were not the kind of people to make mysteries and keep secrets, and the fact of our probable ruin was all over the house long before breakfast time.

There was no formal dismissal to our numerous household ; mamma, as she had occa-

sion to see them, said, "You have heard all about it, of course; you must find a new place as soon as you can, and see that it be a good one; my house has always been well kept, and ought to afford you a good character."

As there were no formalities, so there were no outward lamentations; but I must remember, with gratitude, that our open dealing called forth increased respect from them.

It was my father's wish that our ruin should be met openly, and the expenses evidently and instantly cut down. He, who had been lavish of his thousands, knew the value of a sixpence, and as he had spent without grudging, he now spared without shame.

Strange as it may seem, I that day had only one anxiety, and that was for the appearance of Mr. Bell Norton. I am sure no sordid desire of securing a home for dear Lucy in any way mingled with my feeling, or with hers. Had he come forward I think she would eagerly have sought to release him, but

having suffered him to see into her heart it seemed to her at that time, and I think to me too, to be a necessity to her self-respect that he should say in open words what he had conveyed by a thousand other ways. But this day, as yesterday, went by without his coming, or making any sign.

Papa came home that night more wearied and worn than the day before. Matters proved worse than he had supposed. His truthful, energetic nature had been imposed upon. He had worked hard and spent lavishly; but far within his earnings; while the source of his wealth had been gradually melting away. Things had become so complicated that it was difficult to release himself from the dishonour which clung to his partner. It would require all his strong energy, industry, and will to bring him out clear in character; and so hopeless was the failure that it was evident there would be nothing saved.

It was easy to see that the first excitement

over he found it impossible to recall the elastic vigour of his youth, and that the pain of the work before him was unnerving him.

We had still our luxuries and comforts, but I began to see that trouble was real.

The next day I remember I was sitting at my window, sadly thinking of Mr. Bell Norton; Lucy was sitting reading near me, for we were fond of being together. Suddenly I started up with a joyous exclamation, for at the door I saw two sleek, well-known horses, belonging, as I knew well, to Mr. Norton, and his groom.

"He is a true man," I said, turning gladly to Lucy.

She flushed and trembled, and putting aside her book, went to to the looking-glass.

"Do I look very poor and ruined," she asked, turning her face to mine, glistening in its brightness and happiness.

"Very, dear," I answered with glad irony.

Presently there came word to us that Mr.

Norton was asking for the young ladies. We went down together, Lucy and I, and came into the drawing-room so much in our usual manner that I think the man who waited for us must have been a little puzzled.

We were both pleased to see him, and Lucy greeted him with frank courtesy, nay, more, a blush of pleasure stole over her pale face and made it lovelier than ordinary. Mamma had her handkerchief to her eyes. They had been talking of our misfortunes, and, perhaps the consolation offered had not been of the most cheerful nature. Mr. Norton, who was standing hat in hand upon the hearth-rug, did not attempt to sit down after we came in.

"I have been deeply, painfully grieved," he said, without emotion ; and the words, to my impulsive nature, seemed to come out with a cold ring in them, "indeed I have been thinking of you ever since I heard the sad news in the City the day before yesterday."

He addressed himself more particularly to

Lucy. I could see that her large eyes had in them a puzzled expression. She did not understand him. Love, which is sometimes so quick, is at other times so slow to suspect, but I knew that these words should have had in them more tenderness, and should have been addressed to her ear alone.

"It is very sad for papa," she answered quietly.

"It is very sad for you all," he said, almost bitterly, and then I did detect a little feeling. He might have gladly humbled himself to wed with Lucy, rich, but to find us all poor? It was very mortifying; looking back I can find excuses for him which were not forthcoming at the moment.

There is something low and vulgar in being unlucky, and certainly luck had been against us. Nothing more, I feel certain, except perhaps, that papa had been so magnanimous and prince-like; so above suspicion of his friend

and partner, that he had allowed things too much to take their own course.

There came a pause then, as Mr. Norton did not resume his seat we also remained standing, looking at him.

"Have you thought of the future," he said, still favouring Lucy with his especial attention, and speaking in a tone of patronage, which was irrepressibly offensive to me, making me place my foot more firmly on the ground, perhaps to stay my wrath.

"No," she faltered, "the time is yet very early."

Her future, had never, in these last few days, I felt sure, been unlinked with his, either as accepting or repelling his love. There had been time and place in her heart for no other plans than these.

"Because," he said, seeming to inflate himself with fatherly condescension as he spoke, "if you had, I should be too happy

to help. Should you decide on turning your talents to account as a governess, I would do my best in making enquiries among my friends. The Countess of Haviland is most kind in serving destitute ladies, and she would help me, I feel certain."

What were we to do? three defenceless women. If we had been men we might have laid a significant hand upon his shoulder and pushed him down stairs, as it was, we met his remarks in silence. Lucy's lips quivered, but she did not raise her eyes, and he did not look at me, or he might have seen a dangerous fire lurking beneath my eyelids.

"You are very kind," said mamma coldly.

"Then I can do nothing for you to-day," he said, still speaking to Lucy, fancying, perhaps, who knows, that he was doing her a kindness.

"Nothing," she said, quietly.

"But if I can you will drop me a line?"

There was silence here ; who could make such a promise ?

" You are entering into painful details which we have not yet had time to consider," I said, seeing neither mamma nor Lucy could speak ; " when the time comes we shall be ready to do our duty, I hope."

" I hope so," he said, looking at me with glassy eyes, which had no expression in them. " I wish I could have been of use. A word from me to the Countess of Haviland would, I am sure, be of service, these things are so difficult to obtain ; so very difficult."

Then he said good bye, rather hastily, and I rang the bell to have him shewn out so impetuously, that I lost the opportunity of shaking hands with him. It was but a poor stratagem, and did not save poor Lucy from doing so. Even in those few minutes how the glory and the glistening had gone out of her face, and how very poor and utterly ruined

she looked. I was impatient that he should be gone; that he should not see this; for even then I could divine that if a man does not want a woman of his own will no feeling of pity will ever move him.

He was gone. We stood and looked at each other while the horses curvetted upon the gravel drive below, and we could hear Mr. Norton soothing his steed to enable him to mount him; and even while the master and man took their way across the Common. But when the last sound died away, and no further effort was necessary, Lucy sank down upon the floor, burying her face upon a couch, and one had to stand by and hear her agonizing sobs, and see the slow heaving of her shoulders. If her heart could have broken in that moment, when her pain seemed beyond endurance, she would doubtless have deemed it a mercy; but how then are life's great lessons of patience and endurance to be learned; how, except through pain, can earth

purify for Heaven? Need I say that we tried to comfort her, but, alas, how little comfort can be given to one wounded alike in affection and self-respect.

Mr. Norton had done his work thoroughly. He had made it clear, beyond the possibility of mistake, that he had changed his intentions and wishes with the change of circumstances. In this I am inclined to think he did well.

Painful and bitter as the humiliation was, the woman he had won with so much pains, and cast off so quickly, was at least spared the sickness of hope deferred. She could at least rise up and battle with a slight which could not be misunderstood. Many men do as Mr. Norton did, but with less decision and more cowardice. I have lived to hear dear Lucy say, "He did well to come as he did."

But not at that moment; then all the passion of a loving woman's nature rose up to condemn him with the bitterness and anguish which must go up to Heaven like a curse.

CHAPTER VIII.

O let thy soul
Remember what the will of Heav'n ordains
Is ever good for all, and if for all,
Then good for thee. Nor only by the warmth
And soothing sunshine of delightful things
Do minds grow up and flourish.

AKENSIDE.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh, my poor sister, how my heart bled for her the more that I felt that no comfort I could bring her could really still the beating of that dreadful agony of mind. The story, when it was told to him, made my father's brow more dark and heavy, and he who could, I think, have flung off even now, in his middle age the load of poverty, as the strong man threw by the green withes with which traitorous hands had bound him, felt the bitterest sting from the desertion of his daughter. That was a pang which he could not resist ;

a poisoned arrow driven right home by the hand of a friend.

But though we were so powerless to comfort her, we all of us treated Lucy like a sacred thing to be set apart and tended even amidst the calamity which, to outward eyes, had stricken us all alike.

"Do not, dear, do not," she said, one day, when she saw me draw her favorite chair forward to the window and place a cushion for her feet, and lay the book she liked by her side. Not that she read much, when she suffered herself to rest from helping forward the necessary labour of our removal, but she liked to sit so, looking out over the Common towards the road where Mr. Norton had disappeared.

"Would it not be better, Lucy, dear," I said, bending over her, not looking in her face, so pale and weary, but leaning on her chair behind, "to talk out your sorrow sometimes; keeping it to yourself makes it heavier." For after the first day, after her first burst of

passionate grief, anguish and self-contempt, she had never mentioned his name.

"I think not," she said, without the peevishness I could so readily have pardoned.

"Talking is a bad nurse to forgetfulness, and it would wound my self-respect still more. Have patience with me and let me find strength my own way."

"Patience," I said, "as if you called for patience; you seem to me to have borrowed strength from Heaven."

"Where else could we find it?" she said, wearily, "but it has not come yet; my heart is all in rebellion, dear, but I know that is wrong, and why should I spread such feelings to you. Mamma is patient for her child. She told me her child's happiness was hers, and losing it she would be patient under the loss, as if it were her own. Be patient too, darling, and be prepared, all our friends may desert us."

I knew she spoke of Brice, and had learned

by the fatal knowledge she had gained to distrust all men, and I felt the colour kindling in my cheeks, though we were so placed that we could not see each other's face.

I did not answer, but followed her eyes out over the Common. The sun was going down in glory, and all the summer sky was painted with the changing colours which vary before you have time to feel all their beauty. How often of a summer night had we three girls wandered out together to watch such sunsets as these. How often also, indulging dreams, born, perhaps, from the satiety of our wealth and accompanied by Mr. Norton, taking pains to win the delicate reserve of my sister into confidence.

"I shall be sorry to leave this," she said, "and yet I think it will be good for me. For oh! there are so many things recall the past to me."

"The past was very happy," I said, assuming the experience of age with my nineteen

years, "I shall always feel grateful for it. It is a great thing to have had such a happy girlhood as ours."

"Yes," she said, faintly; out of the darkness of her present, she could neither look backwards nor forwards so as to see any brightness.

We had arranged to leave our house, and bills shewing that it was to be let, or sold, were affixed upon a staring board in front. In old days we had resisted the temptation to long for more fashionable quarters at other ends of London, and had duly cherished, with kindly pride, the respectability and comfort of our Clapham mansion, with all its rich appurtenances of ungrudged, overflowing expenditure. For this reason the almost stately building had no reproach for us, who had played about it; making it merry for years past. By the grace of God we were brought low, so we said to ourselves, having brought forth some fruit, we poor branches of the vine

were deemed worthy of being pruned of all our superfluous foliage that we might bring forth more fruit. If it had not been for Lucy's sorrow I think we should all have gone on our way rejoicing, and as it was, we never murmured over our change of circumstances, though Lucy had been wounded by her friend, and my father's trusting confidence in his had been turned to bitterness and cruel loss.

"I wonder when Glynn will be back," he said to me one day.

"He went away for three weeks,' I said, "but do you want him ? '

"Yes, I think his clear head would serve me now, would help me better than any one elses."

"But, papa," I said earnestly, "is it well to seek him or any one's help but our own just now. Has not Mr. Norton given us an example that our friends may change with our altered circumstances ?"

He looked at me earnestly, and I returned his look with courage.

"Mr. Glynn must hear of our misfortunes when he returns; perhaps he will seek you at once, if not, papa, let him be."

"What do you mean child?"

"I mean nothing more than I say; do not seek him; leave him to seek you; if he is worth anything he will come to you; if not, let him go after Mr. Norton."

He looked at me with a smile.

"I thought Glynn was my friend, and I might treat him as I liked."

"Oh, did you, papa, but you are very much mistaken; he is my friend as well as yours, and three weeks in Prussia, and business on his return, will give him a better excuse than Mr. Norton could devise for staying away. Let him, if he likes; I would not have you seek him for the world."

"And if he seeks me and you?"

"Oh, papa, you know he had but to ask

me any day for these three months past." I determined to place myself on a level with Lucy.

"And he did not; and my foolish child let her heart be taken away without getting one in return."

"I think I had his," I answered, hanging my head a little; "but I was rich, and he was poor; but, papa, I shall not grieve; I only wish you to see that Lucy is not worse treated than I am."

"Than you," he said, puzzled.

"Of course you know, dear papa, no one will seek us now until you have made haste to build up our fortunes again; so keep up your courage for our sake."

"But you said your being rich deterred him."

"Ah, so I thought; only do not seek him now; I have told you all I feel. We are far, far better without any of them. You are the only true man in the world."

"Why do you suspect Glynn?"

"I suspect myself. What am I compared to Lucy? She is handsome and good; I am nothing compared with her, and if she is left, why should not I be? We shall be truer friends, she and I, that is all. But this is no time to think of such things; only do not seek him, or seeing him, ask him home. Protect me, papa, as I would protect you, if I could, and when we leave here," I said insinuatingly, "need we leave our address."

"I think we must. I never lived in the dark yet, and I cannot begin now."

"Very well," I said, resignedly, "only it will look like asking him to come."

"Not a bit; I will say his visits are inconvenient, and that we keep no company."

"That will be best," I said, brightening, "be like a prince in your misfortunes, papa, and to me poor Richard was always a king, even when they shaved him from the dirty

ditch in the fields. They shall not take your royalty from you."

"So to be royal I am to turn my back on my dearest friends."

"Yes, like Richard you must say, 'Let no man know me now.'"

"And yet I am to work my way up again," he said, with a smile in his eye, "I never knew that done by sulking."

"Oh, no, not sulking."

"It is something very like it."

"Well, then," I said, persuasively, "seek your friends, if you like, only leave Brice Glynn alone. He is my friend, and surely I can do as I like with my own. What, papa, shall he come and offer to find me a situation as a governess?"

"You said you wished to be as humble as Lucy."

"Ah, papa, I may wish," I said, hiding my flashing eyes upon his shoulder, "but I am

not, you know, and I never was, half so good as Lucy. I need not have this trial, need I, if it can be avoided. There is no necessity for his coming, unless you ask him, and I should be so angry, not a bit like Lucy; I fear I have the spirit of a fury in me, I do, indeed. I felt so angry because he was going away for three weeks, and if I find he is going away for good. Ah! it is far better not to meet."

"I will be very careful," said my father, kissing me tenderly, "we have uphill work before us, and if we do not help each other it will be hard indeed. My darling, I fear you must give me back those emeralds I gave you on your birthday; I chose them when I had no suspicion, but when I gave them a thought had grown up in my mind that all was not right. I had fixed to go over the accounts with Stedman, the day after your birthday. I should not like people to say I invested money in jewels at such a time, and I shall return them."

"Oh, that is easily done," I cried, springing from him, and returning in a few minutes out of breath, with the box in my hand. He thanked me, kissed me again, promised to buy them for me again some day, if he ever could do so, as if I cared so for the jewels, and then left me, going off into town.

"Jewels!" I said to myself, though before him I would not seem to make light of his gift. Ah! how easy to part with them—but Brice—my Brice. Then I covered my face and tried to mourn for him, but could not. I believed in him, loved him, confided in him too well. I knew he loved me, and whatever I said to myself I felt sure he would come to me with his heart in his hand.

CHAPTER IX.

My child, my child! thou leavest me, I shall hear
The gentle voice no more that blest mine ear
With its first utterance. I shall miss the sound
Of thy light step amidst the flowers around,
And thy soft breathing hymn at twilight's close,
And thy 'Good night' at parting for repose.

* * * * * *

Yet blessings with thee go!
Love guard thee, gentlest! and the exile's woe
From thy young heart be far!

HEMANS.

CHAPTER IX.

With his usual decision and promptitude of action papa made arrangements for our leaving the house in which we had dwelt now for some years, keeping up that pleasant state and hospitality which became his wealth. It was like him, not to go far away, but to take a small vacant cottage, on the high road, on the country side of Clapham. It was in accordance with all his known habits of thought and feeling, to set himself up in his new home, within the sight of his old tradespeople, and to fight the weird battle out before their eyes.

He had been in the habit of paying ready-money; a habit of his struggling days carried forward into the time of wealth, and of inappreciable value when the blow of misfortune fell upon him. We had therefore no composition with creditors so far as our private life was concerned; and with the great mercantile affairs of the city business we had very little connection, and provided that our father's honesty was made clear they touched us very little, except as the sudden failure of resources.

There still remained my mother's marriage settlement, which, as it had been made of only her own fortune, in the days when they began life together, my father said she had a full right to keep, and it was little enough, though in the way we meant to live it must make us independent.

The cottage we had taken was small indeed, not larger than a gamekeeper's in a country park, and not nearly so romantic.

We looked at it in some dismay ; Meta, and Lucy, and I, as one evening, in these sad weeks we went out to pay a visit of inspection.

It was not very far from the Common, but it was so insignificant in appearance that in our walks we had hitherto paid it no attention.

"It will be near enough to the old home," said Meta, "to make it possible for friends to ask our address, and to come on to find us. It will be terrible living here."

We did not answer her as we stood together looking at the small one-sided building, which even in this glorious summer had very little about it to make it tempting. It had one window, that of the single sitting-room, facing the front, with the door on one side of it. The little house had been intended to be one of a row, but the builder perhaps found the speculation did not answer and had abandoned it, so that our new abode looked on

one side, as if it had lost its balance. A front view, of course, had been desirable, and therefore the most had been made of the little plot of ground, so that the house ran back in a manner quite out of proportion with its frontage. But my father had been right in thinking it capable of more comfort than many a better looking dwelling; at all events, here it was, and we had to make the best of it.

The kitchen lay at the back of the parlour, and over these were two bedrooms, with a small attic above, for the girl servant we intended to engage.

"We shall learn a new way of living here," said Lucy, trying to seem cheerful as she leant upon the little gateway, and looked into the neglected garden.

"We must plant a creeper," I said, "to shade the window; we will bring one down to-morrow, and it will be something to watch it grow."

"It will be much better," said Meta, re-

solutely, "to go out as governesses. I shall try for a travelling situation."

Lucy looked round with a frightened expression in her large eyes. He who had robbed her of her faith in man had taken from her faith in herself.

"Do you think it is our duty?" she asked, with a meekness quite new to her; for Lucy had hitherto been the guiding spirit among us three.

"No," returned Meta, "not necessarily our duty altogether, but better than living here with that discontent which I know would gnaw at my heart all the time. I would much rather be up and doing, and battling with the world."

"Papa and mamma would be very desolate without us all," I said, for like Lucy I was deeply attached to home, and clung to it. "But will there be enough to live upon do you think?"

"To vegetate upon, certainly," said Meta,

"with struggling and contriving; my very heart would go dead under such a life."

We turned sadly back towards home. Meta had given a new turn to our thoughts. We were not slow in making them known to our parents, and did so that very evening.

The tears came to my mother's eyes; she knew enough of the world to know how uncertain was the prospect before her daughters, how very dark indeed to her maternal vision; but she saw that my father was going to speak, and she deferred to him.

"So far as we are concerned," he said, "if it were only a crust we had to eat, it would be sweeter shared with our children. We have never been without you, and the hardest part of this misforture would be that of losing you. But you have a right to choose. I have in some sense forfeited my authority, and I feel that in this you must be your own best judges."

"I am ready to go or to stay at your

bidding," I said, putting my hand upon his arm.

"Then stay," he said, decidedly; "it is my wish."

Lucy only looked at mamma with those large eyes, which had grown so pathetic.

"Lucy will stay to comfort me," mamma said, "and Meta, love?"

She added this anxiously, for Meta alone had made no sign, except by her face, which looked at the world in a kind of defiance.

"I cannot stay at home to be a burden," she said at last. "I am too active. I would rather be at work."

"Take time to think of it, dear," mamma said; "one extra mouth is nothing to feed. You will be no burden, only a sweet comfort to us."

"Mamma," she answered, firmly, "I can see the life you are going to lead better than you do, and I would lighten it to you, and to myself."

"Be it so, then," said papa. "Soften your lot, as best you can, my poor child."

In all this there had been no hard words and no hard thoughts, although there was much grief. I am sure mamma exerted herself to procure what she so much dreaded, and papa tried hard to carry out Meta's wishes in a satisfactory manner. At last he succeeded, and Meta was accepted by one of his friends hitherto not personally known to us—a rich old merchant, who promised to treat her with all kindness—as the companion of his wife.

Then preparations were sadly and hastily made for her departure, and each of us added something from her own store to enrich Meta —Meta who would remain a denizen of that world we were about to quit altogether.

At last, and all too soon as it seemed to us, Mrs. Mac Phinn came to fetch her, surrounded by all the paraphernalia of that wealth, which we had so hastily laid aside, and our first parting was accomplished.

"These things have become necessaries to me, they are no longer luxuries nor even comforts," Meta said to me, as she pointed to the fine horses and men-servants.

It was no time for argument or philosophy, and I could but throw my arms about her, and sob out my wish that she might be happy.

I took my leave of her upon the stairs, following her almost to the drawing-room door, for I would not go in, and then I went sadly up again, to watch the carriage which was to take her away.

Presently I saw her, seated by Mrs. Mac Phinn, and though I thought there must be tears in her eyes, and choking sobs in her throat, I could see nothing but the smile with which she nodded to me, just before the sumptuous vehicle moved out of sight. Then I knelt down and cried bitterly to myself, praying long and tenderly for poor Meta.

CHAPTER X.

Oh! mine old home!
My quiet, pleasant chamber, with the myrtle
Woven round the casement; and the cedar by,
Shading the sun; my garden overgrown
With flowers and herbs, thick set as grass in fields;
* * * * * *
Oh! mine own dear home!

MARY RUSSEL MITFORD.

CHAPTER X.

I have said that our old home was at Clapham, and that, in spite of all fashionable suggestions, we had clung to it, and refused to move our Lares and Penates at the dictates of that capricious thing called society. It was a grand mansion, moreover, such as we might not have secured anywhere else for the same rent. It stood in its own grounds, was large and commodious and faced the breezy common, which gave us blooming cheeks and springing spirits.

Now that we were called upon to leave it, we looked upon it, not with more loving admiration, but with more critical observation. It would be within a walk of our new cottage, and perhaps we should often turn our steps in that direction, in order that we might take a glance at the windows of our old rooms and the shining oleander which climbed about them. We thought so then, not knowing how soon it would grow unfamiliar to us when in the hand of strangers, or how the healthy tendency of life leads forwards rather than backwards to that past, which no foresight, nor wisdom, nor repentance of ours has power to touch.

Papa was yet unsettled in his plans, and, although so prompt in his domestic changes, could decide nothing as to business matters; but he had determined that the income derived from my mother's settlement being the only certain provision we possessed, should be the boundary of our home expenses, and

until he could see further into the future, he resolved that he would not exceed it.

This gave us some data to go upon, which saved us from many mistakes, and forced us peremptorily to relinquish all our luxurious and old habits of expenditure without hesitation, leaving him free to retrieve the past if that were possible.

The small cottage was hastily furnished with such comforts as could be crowded into its tiny space. To me, at first, it seemed like going to live in a cupboard; but it is astonishing how soon we adapt ourselves to circumstances.

During this time of our giving up of the old house—our chambers, harp, piano, library, all our cherished possessions—it was a matter of honour between us to shed no tears, utter no murmurs, and even to go about the business cheerfully and brightly. It was but ruin—ruin untinged by the damp shadows which start up from the charnel house and

the grave. Only Meta had gone from us; but she was happy, and made no complaints. With that exception we remained still to look in each other's faces, and to walk on trustfully into the future, holding each the support of the other's hand. Why should we mourn and lament over the wreck. The primroses would bloom in the hedgerows still for us; the sun would shine, and the moon we were so fond of watching, would still serenely take its silver way through the heavens. So, had it not been for Mr. Bell Norton, I think all would have been well; and as it was in the bustle of moving Lucy roused herself, and tried and often succeeded in making us forget that she had anything on her mind.

The three weeks from our party had not fully run out before our move had been effected. I do not think it was quite as uncomfortable as it might have been, because we took care to have the cottage entirely furnished before we entered it; but yet it was

very strange and shocking—I cannot use a lighter word. We settled in before nightfall, and papa talked a great deal of its extreme comfort, of the convenience of the cupboard we had set aside for his use, and the delight of being free from the responsibilties of a large household, spoke of Horace and his Sabine farm; but still I think the shock was as great to him as to us. When we came to lie down in our rooms at night, there was the sense of being stifled, and the feeling that the low, narrow walls were closing in upon us, but we grew accustomed to them very soon; and I think in two days had forgotten that we had ever needed bigger ones.

We began our new housekeeping with a little girl servant, kept, I believe, almost for appearance sake; but, indeed I ought not to say so. Betsy was a good little thing, and lighted the fire, and cleaned the pots, and did such things as we should probably have stumbled over. However, we did the greater part of

the work—made the beds, dusted and tidied, and looked to such little cooking as we required, making things tolerably nice, though of course we had to learn how to make one egg do where we had formerly used half-a-dozen. For after the example of our good princesses, we had learned how to do these things in preparation for that rainy day which had certainly come upon us in a very pelting fashion.

We found this home-work a great boon, for without it we should sadly have missed our healthy horse exercise, and the variety afforded by our constant visiting. And then if we were tired—to be tired is far better than to be bored—and it made it pleasant of an evening to rest, sitting on the low stone wall, which separated our strip of garden from the fields at the back—that is Lucy and I.

"It is a horrid little place," she said to me one evening, as we so sat, and she turned

her head round to scan our barren domain. "Look at it; that back door, without a porch, supported by the soft-water tub, and the straight walk, bordered with cabbages, that never will be fit for dinner, and the only attempt at a tree that plum-tree, without fruit. There is nothing about the whole thing which does not look poor and common place; and yet I begin to like it—I really do. It leaves the past so far behind. Fancy Mr. Norton coming to call upon me here"

It was the first time she had mentioned his name for many days, and she did so now half cheerfully, and half in scorn. I thought her tone was hopeful, and I felt relieved and pleased.

"He would not find you looking dreadfully forlorn," I said.

"No," she answered, dreamily; "do you know, Ally, I think papa and mamma and you have been very good."

"And you, dear," I answered.

"And me a little, a very little," she replied, slowly, "because I had so much more to be thankful for."

"You, Lucy, you were the worst off of all."

"No, I was saved from a cruel fate. Think"—here she shuddered—"if I had married that man—a man who never really, really loved me."

"I think he did," I said gently, "but yielded to the baser part of his nature."

"No, Alice, do not think it; he never truly cared for me. I have had a great escape, and would be thankful if I could; but I fear I am not yet—not quite yet. I shall be very soon, I hope, otherwise I may fall into worse peril. No, if he had struggled and then yielded, as you say, to his baser nature, I should pity him; but there was no struggle, and there is no call for pity, except at his not being better than he is. Poor fellow! he was very clever and very nice; but, Ally, I think I shall not die for him."

"Oh no, Lucy, dear, depend upon it, they are all alike."

"Are they dear?" she said, putting her hand fondly on my shoulder; "I hope not."

"I think they are," I replied, "and the only peace with regard to them consists in putting them aside altogether. Here, we will not think of them. If we can make papa and mamma happy, that is enough."

"It shall be our daily task," said Lucy, but still she looked at me with a dreamy smile.

CHAPTER XI.

Tu crois en ta vertu ; mais, pour avoir ce droit,
As-tu jamais souffert de la faim et du froid ?
Sais-tu, pendant les nuits où le souci s'éveille,
Tout ce qu'à l'indigent le désespoir conseille ?
A ton chevet fiévreux, as-tu vu, comme lui,
Un démon te montrer l'opulence d'autrui,
Puis, mettant sous tes yeux ta misérable vie,
Dans ton âme ulcérée introduire l'envie ?
Ah ! ces rapprochements et ces comparaisons,
Déposent dans les cœurs de rapides poisons,
Et celui qui résiste à leur œuvre malsaine,
Peut vanter sans orgueil, sa probité certaine.

PONSARD.

CHAPTER XI.

That low wall running for a few feet along the back of our little garden, became a favourite resting place of ours of an evening, for we naturally at first felt a little cramped by the confinement of our one small sitting-room. A meadow lay beyond this wall, not a pretty one by any means, and with only a few stumps of trees about it here and there in the hedges; but there was often a cow set to graze here, and it is very composing to the mind to watch cattle feeding.

"It is a strange lot," Lucy said to me, in

these first days, when that lot was very strange to us, "we are brought very low, indeed set aside from all usefulness in the world. Why, I wonder?"

She looked out with her sweet face, resigned enough, but with a patient wonder in her eyes which was very touching to me. The cow, which had been grazing near us, paused here to lie down, contentedly chewing the cud at leisure, and bringing close to us the sweet odour of her breath.

"That we may know ourselves, I suppose?" I answered, speaking as dreamily as she did. It was so like a dream. The present had come upon us so suddenly that it was difficult to realize the fact that we were not where we were by some mistake.

"Ah! yes," she answered, "to know ourselves to be poor, and empty, and worthless."

"Not altogether, I hope," I replied, rousing myself, "surely we shall find some work to do, even here."

"Our work," said Lettie, "will be to do little in the world, and to be contented to know it. It will be a very different life to the old one, and we must brace up our nerves to bear it. I wonder how we shall be when we turn into two quiet maiden ladies?"

"Not yet," I said, with a smile to hide the shudder which the idea gave me. We were so young, so untried, so fresh to life. Lucy's hand resting on the wall was so soft and girlish, surely we could not settle down into such women, as she portrayed without some more stirring scenes.

"The very fact of this strange overthrow," I argued, "shews that life is a drama with many acts. It will be quite as easy for us to be lifted up as thrown down."

"Quite," said Lucy, "only I think we never shall, and now that I have seen how hollow society is, I don't know that I even care."

I could not argue this. Society with Lucy meant, I knew, Mr. Bell Norton.

"Perhaps being poor," I said at last, "we shall get to look on life from a different aspect, and that will bring variety. I do not know that we ever thought much about our work in life before."

"Did we not?" said Lucy, looking amused, "then perhaps we can do without it now?"

"I did not mean that," I explained, eagerly, "but it is such a new way of looking at things that it quite delights me. It is the result of the change, that we should think ourselves set aside because we have no work in life. What work had we to do; I made wax flowers, exquisitely people told me, and we had our parties, and drives and rides, and calls, and dinners. Oh! it was so nice, and I think we were grateful for it while it lasted, but I am much mistaken if that meant work."

Lucy laughed, almost a hearty pleasant laugh, but said in vindication:

"It was something to influence society, as people do who see much of each other. And we were never idle, you must allow that. See how easily Meta found something to do."

"No, we were never idle, and yet I hardly recognise that we were more at work than we are now. Making beds and dusting rooms is real work."

"Yes, very real. Only servants can do that."

"Rather better than we can do it, I dare say," I said, "for the work is new to us. Perhaps, after all, nobody has so much work in the world as they fancy they have, and could well be spared, only mercifully they are led to fancy themselves of use."

"Your creed would soon bring us back to the Wild Indian state, Allie," said Lucy; "but we will not think too much about it. I wonder if those cabbages ever mean to have hearts and be fit for cooking?"

"Perhaps they want tying up," I said, gravely.

"Oh, silly child," said my sister kindly, "that is only done to lettuces. But cabbages remind me that we no longer eat asparagus or kale, so we ought to do away with these white petticoats. Let us go to-morrow and buy some coloured ones, that will last ever so long without washing."

"Cannot we wash these ourselves," I said, anxiously clinging to this little delicacy of attire.

"If we did the starch and soap would cost almost as much, darling," replied Lucy. "I think the others will do best. If we can manage our collars, it will be as much as we can do, and perhaps in time we shall bring our ironing to such perfection, that we may be able to try papa's shirts."

I agreed to Lucy's judgment a little sadly. It seemed so easy to be poor, but so difficult to do without the delicacies, which were really

riches. But the next day we took a long walk London way, and purchased three coloured petticoats, which we calculated would last an age without washing, and, bringing them back, sat merrily to work to make them up as quickly and as nicely as we could.

"I fear," I said, as we broached again the subject of the saving we had effected in the washing, "that poverty means dirt."

"Something like it—in London, at least," said Lucy, looking up from the seam which was puzzling her and making her knit her brows.

"And hiding the dirt," I pursued, "means buying everything of a dirty colour."

"Yes, we shall grow browner and shabbier as the years go on," she replied, composedly.

"Then I have found out my work," I cried, exultingly.

Lucy had fitted her obstinate seams, and could look up amused and curious.

"It is to keep my spirit bright and fresh in spite of it all," I said; "and I will—oh! I will—I certainly will—if it please God," I added, below my breath.

The thought came to me like an inspiration. To be bright, cheerful, independent, if possible, and grateful if independence were impossible, I found out in that moment were the duties of the poor, and I resolved to adopt them.

It was well I did so resolve, for as day followed day there fell a weariness into them which I could only rid myself of by an effort. Papa came and went, trying to be cheerful, but in reality anxious.

"We have come to the worst, dear papa," said I one day, as I stood with him by the little gate to see him off on foot, as once I had used to part with him at his brougham. "Why need you be anxious—we do very well."

"Do you?" he said; "but I am not old

enough to be ruined yet. I must be at work; I have, too, some little hope of clearing things —at least, so as to save my good name. I have found out Glynn's address, and have written to ask him to find out something for me at Hocklin's, the German house with which he had some connection."

"He knows what has happened, then?" I said, calmly.

"I told him," papa said; "wishing his help. Millan and Frow have been good enough to extend his time of absence that he may make these enquiries for me. Good-bye, dear; I shall be late," and so he went, not looking at me.

Then there was a reason to keep Brice away still—for well had I known when his term of absence had expired. That was why he had not been; for that he would come I had felt sure, until so many days had gone by without bringing him. It was then that the weariness had crept in upon my days, and

I had been bright with such a sore effort; but now as I stood watching my father disappear down the road, there came a gladness in my heart, making it run over with happiness—and all that day was as bright as if no poverty had fallen into my lot, nor marred my chances of a happy future.

Dear Brice! he had been so good to me, and I could so little do without him.

But the time began to grow long, and I had so wished for his coming, that it seemed doubly long to me. One other thing made me anxious: the blow which had fallen upon our fortunes seemed to tell more heavily with mamma than with any of us. She had always looked so young, being full of happiness and comfort, and a kindly interest in the lot of others; but she now seemed failing and beaten down, and to have grown suddenly older than her years.

She missed Meta; but her great grief, I think, consisted not so much in the loss of

money and social standing as in the failure of her daughters' lovers. Mothers, I think, live their lives over again in those of their daughters, but perhaps with a keener insight into the thorny path of love, which to their children is as yet untried. Mamma missed Mr. Norton; he had brought to her an ambitious dream; but I think she felt the absence of Brice still more. She had already taken him to her heart, and twined her motherly affection round his comely head. I think, judging from her complacent smile when he used to come to us, that that coming had been very pleasant to her; that it had been almost as sweet as her own courting days, and that when my pulse quickened with its gladness, there had been a vibration in her own. So tender is a mother's love, so intimate, that I believe she can as little disassociate herself from her child's joy or trouble as she could when she lay a tender, dependent thing within her arms—and that as then the infant's

cry pierced her with anguish scarcely to be endured, so she feels, perhaps, even more deeply, though making no outward sign, the sorrows of the maiden, which touch her womanly sympathy more keenly still.

Besides her feeling for me, there was that little want in herself. She had always strongly desired a son; and Brice had seemed ready made to her hand—a very son to be desired; even his strength and manliness was tempting to her as being in contrast to our weakness. Then, too, he was poor, and true parental love rejoices in conferring benefits; but now it was all altered—in contrast with ourselves, he was rich, and it seemed as if he meant to come no more.

CHAPTER XII.

Get thee back, Sorrow, get thee back!
My brow is smooth, mine eyes are bright,
My limbs are full of health and strength,
My cheeks are fresh, my heart is light.
So, get thee back! oh, get thee back!
Consort with age, but not with me;
Why shouldst thou follow on my track?
I am too young to live with thee.

MACKAY.

CHAPTER XII.

THINKING over the subject of my mother's weariness at Brice's long absence—and I had time for much thinking in those long days—I came to look more charitably upon the race of match-makers, especially of match-making mothers. Their deep interest in their children's welfare was, I seemed then to see, rather a matter of feeling than of judgment. That their children should have what they wanted, so far as they could procure it for them, and granted that what they wanted was good, had always seemed to them a rule, perhaps.

What then would seem more desirable, and what more natural that they should try to procure this for them, as they had, to the best of their ability, supplied their other needs. Kindness, and tenderness, and sympathy—that deep, true, innate sympathy which I came to see, a mother feels for her child, are all brought into exercise—all are ready to prompt her. Then where lies the fault? I came to see that too. I saw where the fault lay, the better because my dear mother resisted the temptation to commit it. True love is reticent and modest, and, therefore, charming; but reticence and modesty are not the distinct virtues of middle life, as they are of youth, and mothers too often forget to use them, thereby interfering with that reserve which she should never seek to draw away, even from her own child's heart.

Looking back as I now do, can I pretend to say that marriage is not a blessing? I cannot. It would be hypocrisy. With all

its cares—and that it has many I will not attempt to deny—still I do think it developes a human being's higher nature, and is to be desired. Specially does it open for woman a wider social influence, and give her the most tender relationships. But then it is a blessing which we may not seek for—which must come to us, if it is to be a blessing at all—as a free gift from Heaven. And surely to us their can be no better, costlier gift there a good man's love.

Are not Heaven's best gifts most likely to come to those who are doing their duty day by day, brightly and patiently, and to those who are prepared to accept such things as Heaven's gifts, and not as idols set up in rivalry of Heaven.

My mother was patient, but she was weary. The good seemed to have gone out of her life, and to have left it all cloudy. She could do so little now—she who had been so busy—she who had often laughingly spoken of herself

as an upper servant of society, as I had told Brice, was now overwhelmed with leisure. By eleven o'clock, at the very latest, our household work was finished, and she had to sit down to see out the day, which never now brought with it a single event, until papa returned from town.

We were very poor, but not with the poverty which actually wants a meal, or is necessitated to earn anything. That I think must be very amusing; but our poverty simply took away. It took away our harp and piano, so that, except our voices, which could not well be sold, music was gone, and the wax with which I had been accustomed to make my flowers, for which work I had almost a passion, and the wools with which we had embroidered, and I suppose over which we had wasted our time. Mamma missed the sight of all these pretty occupations, though she had always been too busy in receiving her company, or airing her horses, to do

much herself. I could see that she felt the barrenness and desolation of our life, and that Brice's coming would have been very pleasant as a diversion to her; and this knowledge of her perpetual expectation did fidget me the least bit in the world. I respected her for not talking about him, though I saw through her as plainly as if she had been a glass window.

Perhaps too she pitied me more than I needed pity—youth is proud, and flexible as well, and youth has much happiness in its quick pulses and growing experiences; and I was not always making believe when I seemed so happy, and made Lucy practice duets without the help of an instrument, or sat upon the wall looking out upon that little insignificant field.

I did make believe a little; but yet it was quite true that the tuft of straggling dock leaves, tinged with red, had a beauty for me, and that the cow had turned into a friend. I

might have tried a little, thereby, to hide my own pain; but still it was true that the sight of Lucy's growing composure was very grateful to me, and that, when I was incessant in trying to amuse her, my heart was in the work. I was a puzzle to mamma, I knew; perhaps, sometimes I was a puzzle to myself. I loved Brice; but that he should not blight my life, I was determined—remembering always the task I had set myself—to keep bright and sunshiny for the sake of the dear ones who were about me.

"I fear you are so dull, dear child," mamma said to me one evening when we happened to be alone.

"And if I am, mamma dear," I replied, looking at her with a smile, which I hoped would belie her fear, "how can you help it? Is it any fault of yours?"

"I almost feel as if it were," she answered, sadly enough; "I used to think so much about your pleasures."

"I wish you would put that feeling of responsibility aside now, mamma dear," I said; "I do not think it really belongs to you any more. You have done your best to fit us to do our duty in life, and you must not expect to make our days quite untroubled. We must have care and worry sometimes—even you have no power to shield us from them."

"No, I wish I could," said my dear mother, with a sigh, and taking the inability to do so as a fault I felt sure. "It is all so very different," she added, after a pause: "the days are so long, and nobody comes."

My heart beat a little faster; I feared she was going to speak of Brice, and I could not have borne it.

"If nobody comes," I said, hastily, "surely it is better; we cannot entertain here, and we are so unused to see people without. It is far better for them to remember us as we were, without contrasting the past with the present; besides, where could we put them?"

"Ah! that would be a difficulty," said mamma, following my eyes round the little parlour, which certainly the most daring of auctioneers could not have designated a reception-room. "Still it is not quite a kitchen."

Here her eyes filled with mirth, and we began to laugh in concert.

"You see," I said, "we are poor people now, and must not expect visitors."

"And yet," exclaimed my mother, "there is some one I declare!"

I looked, and as I looked the colour of false shame stole up to my face and burnt in a fever spot I could not banish. Yes, we were poor, indeed—literally poor people, living in a poor dwelling—for there, tapping at our door, stood a district visitor with a bag of tracts, and dressed with what I knew she must call at home her district dress: for, though she did not wear the eccentric costume of the sisters, as they are termed, it was evi-

dent that the plain dress she wore was assumed for a purpose.

Betsy was gone upon an errand, and there was this lady knocking at the door.

"What shall we do?" I whispered.

"Go and let her in," said my mother, amused, and yet with her old habit of instant hospitality.

I went to the door and stood face to face with our visitor, waiting until she should speak.

"You have come to live in my district," she said. "May I come in?"

"Certainly," I said, leading her in, and permitting her to introduce herself to mamma, who rose with infinite courtesy.

She was a tall, slim, fair-haired girl, whose age even my curious eyes could not guess, and she sat down when I gave her a chair, and seemed a little confused.

"And so, my dear," said my mother, kindly, "we are in your district, and you are kind enough to come and see us."

There was a little smile on my mother's lips, which seemed infectious, for the face of the district visitor returned it, though a little shyly.

"I fear," she said, "I have made a mistake."

"Not at all," said my mother, kindly; "we are very glad to see you. You come to leave a tract in your goodness—but you perceive," and she gave a glance at the few books lying about, "that that may not be so much needed; but I am sure a kind visit like yours can never be wholly thrown away."

"You are very good to say so," she said, quite humbly; "some people would have been very angry."

"Why should they when you meant so kindly?" said my mother, evidently pleased to feel that the first sight of her, even in the homely gown she had assumed, was sufficient to convince her of her mistake.

"I used to visit the last people who lived here, you see," explained the visitor.

"I assure you no explanation is necessary beyond your motive," said mamma, blandly; "but if you will feel more satisfied, I will have a tract: I am sure I need being done good to as much as any one."

"Would you really like one?" said the district lady, smiling up and quite pleased, and choosing with trembling fingers a sweet little hymn from her bundle, and presenting it to mamma with much respect and kindliness. Mamma evidently recognised the dexterous kindness which had substituted this for some of the more alarming titles which she could not fail to see, such as "Are you a drunkard?" which might have been offensive. Mamma folded this carefully away, saying:

"You will come and change it another day, and we shall get better acquainted. By what name shall I remember you?"

"Miss Moore," was the reply; "and you I think are Mrs. Lea?"

"Yes, that is my name—what I was need

not affect you. You were right in supposing that we are quite poor people, and your visits will help to keep us civilised."

"I will certainly come," replied Miss Moore; "and it is so kind of you to receive me like this: some people are so rude and frighten me so, but Mr. Otterbourne tells me I must not be frightened out of my duty, and then I may live to do some little good in the end."

Mr. Otterbourne was the clergyman of the district in which we had come to settle.

Miss Moore, thinking she had staid long enough, and her heavy bag of undistributed tracts being evidently an encumbrance on her mind, rose to go. I accompanied her to the door and held it open for her, feeling a little relief on seeing Betsy coming in with her marketing basket, so that Miss Moore might see we still kept a servant.

That I should have come to feel any pride in such a young specimen of maid-of-all-

work, seemed strange to me even then, for I never remembered to have noticed our liveried men with any feeling beyond a kindly gratitude to them for serving us so well and giving us so little trouble.

I walked with Miss Moore to the gate.

"You must be about my own age," she said then, in her naive manner. "I am always so sorry for those who have known better days."

"What are better days?" I said, with that earnestness which I never could put quite aside; and I quoted those words which were so often in my head and on my lips, "'Let the rich man rejoice when he is brought low.'"

"Ah! I forgot that," she said, blushing very sweetly and childishly.

"It is too often forgotten," I said; "but it is a lesson we are trying to learn. We are only children, and do not quite understand the system upon which we are educated as yet, you see."

She did not quite understand me, I think ; she was so gentle and childlike, had undertaken her business of distributing her tracts with much faith and little knowledge, and was scarcely prepared to meet me off the beaten track.

I opened the gate to let her pass; and I fear, in spite of my inward protestations, that it was easier for me to look humble and to pay the deference I did, because I could tell at a glance, by comparing her manners with my own, that I had descended from a position in society which she had never reached, and that I was acquainted with the ways and doings of people and stations which were to her as unknown lands.

I scolded myself for this really proud assumption when in the evening I took my favourite place on the garden wall, and communed with life in presence of the cow and the cabbages and the fine growth of red green dock leaves, and could come to no con-

clusion but that it is no easy thing to be that bright and polished, and beautiful and perfect thing which alone deserves the name of Christian.

"I will try," I said to myself. "I have only just begun to learn the lesson of being brought low—I will be good in time."

CHAPTER XIII.

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguished, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the external space,
Rayless and pathless and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonléss air;
Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day.

BYRON.

CHAPTER XIII.

But day followed day, and no Brice came. Lucy had shed her bitter tears over her desertion, and they had scalded and blistered the poor cheeks, down which they had tried to wear a channel for themselves; but we had pitied her—had made her sorrow our own. And now she had had time to meet her fate; her eyes were dry and her cheeks were rounding again back to health, which, though it might never be so complete again, yet in some sort satisfied us. She was saved from the poison of the wound which has left many

a maiden soured, as well as cast down. Lucy was a Christian, and she accepted her lot.

But for me—no one wept for me; no one I think would have dared to weep, or rather no one could have had the heart to probe a wound which was so far out of sight. I never spoke of Brice, and no one mentioned him to me; but in my heart continually there was a cry, "My love—my hope, why do you not come to me." Such was the cry of my heart as I kept more and more to my place upon the wall, and bemoaned myself and my destiny. I was sitting so one day, perched upon the wall; the wind was high, for winter was coming on fast, and would, I knew, soon rob me of this outlet for my feelings. Therefore it seemed the more necessary that I should enjoy it while I could. I allowed myself to be naughty here—and myself. Indoors I was bright and talkative; I could sing too the lightest melodies, but out here I dared to be

myself, and taking the large dock leaves into confidence, I would alternately lament over and scorn myself. My hair had grown rough and unbound in the wind, and I did not care to tidy it; it swept here and there—not in any romantic fashion, for the fastened knot of my long hair remained, but stray locks escaped, giving me, I fancied, a weird appearance. I felt angry even with my very arms, for I was losing flesh, and for what—a vain delusion.

"Oh," I thought, as the cow looked at me with large pensive eyes, for though she had no hair to blow about her ears, yet I think the wind disturbed her accustomed tranquillity. "Oh! the advantages of being brought low are very hard to see. Even Job had his friends to lament with him."

Then I fell to thinking that Job could not understand his troubles any more than I could mine, and came to see that perhaps if we could understand them they would cease

to be trials at all. Could Job have foreseen that he was to become a monument of patience to future ages, he would perhaps have been more careful in his language, but he would the less have appealed to our sympathies, and would have shewn us far less of the loving pitifulness of Heaven to him who is but dust and ashes, and as wayward as a leaf blown by every wind.

How well I remember the little garden as it looked that day. Its narrow path of flagstones, where two could not walk together—not even Lucy and I, embrace each other as closely as we could; the gooseberry trees which, having furnished fruit enough for half a pudding, seemed contentedly to look upon their retirement into "the sear and yellow leaf" as upon an honourable old age, which provoked me not a little, and the cabbages, which having been cut once, were now economically left to sprout if they would.

"What a picture of my own life," I said to

myself, as I drew up my feet upon the wall, and sat crouched together, idealising my own future.

Oh! vain musings—vain fears—for us poor mortals who know so little of the vast store-house of Providence—as little as of the hidden sources of the frost, the snow, and the hail, which Job was bidden to disclose, if he could—ah! if he could. And yet perhaps, difficult as the problem set him, he deemed it easier to solve, in that moment of loss and desolation, than to divine how the happiness, the household comforts, the parental hopes, and the blessed privileges of friendship and social esteem could be given back to the withered heart and despairing mind.

I was so absorbed in picturing my life, that I had forgotten the hour, even though the darkness was settling down upon the landscape; and I was startled when I heard a step upon the flags, and looking up, saw my

father putting aside the straggling raspberry branches to get to me.

I never let him find me thus. As my heart had grown more desolate, in his company I had tried to hide it by greater gaiety; and now that he had come upon me, I tried hard to rally.

"Poor little Allie," he said, stopping after my first kiss to look into my face.

"You have some news, papa dear," I answered, "I see it in your eyes."

"Perhaps you will think it not worth having?" he answered.

"Anything is better than nothing," I replied.

"My littte girl will not be angry?" he asked, I thought a little apprehensively.

"Not with you dear."

"Glynn is coming down to see us to-morrow night."

"Why should I be angry, Papa?" I said, steadily and coldly.

"I thought you would not like him to find you, and so until now I have denied him our address."

"On what excuse," I asked, my heart giving a bound which told that it had leapt free of the long pain which had imprisoned it.

"Oh, that was easy enough, I told him we were not in circumstances to receive visitors, and did not want them. Was not that what you wished?"

"Oh, dear, blundering papa," I thought, but I said—

"It was quite right, but perhaps it is better for him to come and see that we are not living absolutely any how—perhaps he thinks we have no servant."

It was wonderful even to myself what pride I took in our one little domestic.

"And if he did, child, Glynn would see no shame in that," he said, with honest pride; "he understands me," he added, with some

passion in his voice, "he has been like a son to me—he is noble, self-reliant, honest."

"And you never told me," I said a little piteously, the long, long weeks would assert themselves—would cry out upon their unnecessary anguish—a little, just a little.

"What time will he come?" I asked breathlessly.

"I told him to look in about now and we would give him a cup of tea."

Darkness was settling down upon the landscape so fast that now we could but just discern each other's faces; but to me it seemed as if the sun had just risen, and had transformed the homely garden into a paradise. I followed my father into the house, that dear father whose erect form had begun to bend within these past weeks. I hastened to finish the little preparations for tea, and then seized a moment to steal up-stairs; I could not help it, I kneeled down by our humble bed and

sobbed out my thanksgiving. The joy had come to me not when I was patient and cheerful and resigned, but when my patience and watchfulness had broken down, and I felt and knew how undeserving I was of any mercy, any good—I rose from my knees very humbled and subdued, and yet in two minutes or less the young life in me had asserted itself, and was running over with frivolity. How carefully I smoothed the hair which the wind had roughed, and bathed away the tears which after all had but fallen as a summer-refreshing shower, then went quickly down, no longer feigning gaiety which I did not feel, but silent and demure, and letting my eyelashes shade the happiness which I knew was resting in my eyes.

When papa said good night, and I lingered last, that I might possibly hear something of Brice, he looked at me searchingly.

"My birdie," he said, "has been like an instrument out of tune of late; she should

know a plain working man like me better than to suppose I like her to strain her nerves to amuse me."

After that I went away very quickly, and half resolved never to make believe again. But then making believe does help us women so, and often keeps us up to our duties when otherwise we might lie down and die.

CHAPTER XIV.

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

I love Love—though he has wings
And like light can flee
But above all other things
Spirit, I love thee;—
Thou art love's life! O come
Make once more my heart thy home.

SHELLEY.

CHAPTER XIV.

The next day found me a little more cautious in my joy; I began to remember that Brice Glynn's delicacy had exceeded his ardour, and to feel doubtful of our friendship under these new circumstances, but still I was very glad. I had had time to forget that I was a rich girl once, and to remember that Brice would have to stoop to gather the fallen cherry which might once have seemed to hang so temptingly out of reach.

I would have made a feast for him, but mamma interposed.

"The time," said she, "for such things is gone by; Mr. Glynn must satisfy both his appetite and his thirst elsewhere, if a cup of tea and a new loaf and butter are not enough for him."

It would be very different I thought to the gorgeous suppers to which we had once welcomed him.

But at the last I found mamma had given way a little, and had added water-cresses and a jar of strawberry jam to our usual fare.

Lucy and I kept on our simple dresses of cheap grey alpacca, which we had adopted as more suited to our position than our former ones, but I could not help adding a blue ribbon to my hair, and as for my hair itself I folded it after the first fashion, for that cost nothing.

Then I sat down to wait for their coming, with a book in my lap which I could not read.

How my heart danced as I heard his voice

talking with papa, with its grave earnest accents, but when he reached the gate I shrank back, I could hardly bear the joy which rushed upon me, and knowing that my face told tales which should not be told, I fled from the room and gained my own before the little discussion, which kept them from entering, was concluded.

I stood by the glass and schooled myself, I could have fallen on my knees by his side, laid my head down in humility before him, and sobbed out my thanks that he had come at last, but instead of this of couse I walked quietly down and entered the tiny sitting room, which permitted no airs and graces at all, and into which it was necessary rather to push oneself than to walk. They were all sitting round the table, very little choice of seats being given, and this seeming the easiest way of getting rid of themselves; Brice was wedged in near mamma, and the only way by which we could shake hands

was by stretching our arms behind Lucy ; but what an honest glow there was upon the dear face which had a habit of shining all over when he was pleased, which set me at ease in a moment. It was the same Brice, and that was all I cared for; but I let them talk, I was too happy to say a word. It was quite enough for me to feel that he was in the room, and to hear his grave manly voice, which was quite touching in its tone of respect when he addressed mamma.

He did not make any allusions to the change which had come upon us. He had grown too intimate with papa, we could see, for it to be strange to him; and I really think our little maid, Bessy, was a relief to him, for he seemed to look at her with interest, as she edged her way in and out with the kettle or the tea things. She enabled us to sit still, and although, theoretically, men like women to be useful, they like them to be so out of sight, and to be for their

will and pleasure, as entirely at their service as if they had nothing to do in the world but to listen to them.

There was a great deal of business talk that evening between papa and Brice—not forced talk, but such as seemed to come as a natural continuation of some theme of constant interest. There had come to Brice a greater sobriety of feeling, combined with a deeper interest in the stake for which men play. I felt this almost by intuition. But a few months before, he had been all my own. Life and its interests were subordinate to me and to my companionship. I was the thing of value in all the world to him. I was the bright young passion of his life.

And I had taken advantage of this just a little. I had lorded it over him sometimes, and in my weak hands I had held the bridle-rein which kept his love perpetually in check. But now I saw that he had taken up a man's

interests, and had fallen into the way of thinking that there were other and graver duties in life even than making love. If I did not find this out altogether that evening, it yet seems to me now that I did, though probably the knowledge came upon me by degrees. At least that night I could see, by the way in which they spoke together, that my father had come to have a confidence in him, and to appeal to his judgment. And at the same time I perceived that the subjects which interested my father were seemingly of even deeper moment to Brice.

I have since learned to see and admire the balance which is so evenly kept up between the varied ages of men who live upon this earth at the same time. Those who gain in experience lose in nerve and vigour, while the energy of youth often carries with it more power than the careful wisdom of age.

I loved my father with fervent affection,

and yet it pleased me to see him defer to Brice.

That evening sped away rapidly, though we did nothing but talk, and did not move from our places round the table—as, indeed, how could we—and Brice had not said one particular word to me all the evening through. It was only when he rose to go, and we moved from our places, that he said more to me than to anyone else.

"You do not mind my coming, do you?"

"Certainly not," mamma answered, heartily. "It is a comfort to see the face of an old friend."

He still looked at me, and by this time he had given me his hand to say good-night, and he said again,

"Do you mind?"

Then I looked up at him and smiled, and his eyes smiled back an answering look of confidence.

He was mine still I felt; but never again should I stand unrivalled and alone in his affections. He had taken up another love—a love which fascinates so many men, only that they call it business.

CHAPTER XV.

Oh, move, thou cottage, from behind that oak!
Or let the aged tree uprooted lie,
That in some other way yon smoke
May mount into the sky!

The clouds pass on; they from the heavens depart:
I look—the sky is empty space;
I know not what I trace;
But, when I cease to look, my hand is on my heart.

Oh! what a weight is in these shades: Ye leaves,
When will that dying murmur be suppress't?
Your sound my heart of peace bereaves,
It robs my heart of rest.

WORDSWORTH.

CHAPTER XV.

I LEARNED from what was talked that night, and from what my father told us afterwards—told me and Lucy, that is, for mamma was always and entirely in his confidence—that Brice thought he saw a way out of our difficulties, and that they were thinking of entering into partnership; that my father was to start in business again, and that Brice thought so well of the chances in their favour, that he had offered to stake his savings, and to give up the certain situation which he now held.

I felt a little uneasy at this. We had gone

down so easily, that I had lost confidence in business, and could not bear the idea of Brice's attaching himself to our ruined fortunes; but I said nothing. What right had I to speak.

After this first meeting Brice came once at least, if not twice, every week, and the old terms of intimacy very soon re-established themselves, only that his chief talk seemed always to be with my father, who thought so much of him, and that he made love to me in the interludes. I began to be very sensible of the difference of my position, but it did not lead to any resentment in my mind, but rather to my treasuring up and thinking a great deal more of any look or word of affection he gave me. A kind of awe stole up in my mind for him, which was rather pleasant than otherwise, and made me very cautious of saying anything which might offend him, or run the chance of losing me his regard. The respect which my father had come to have for him, on account of that energy and

rapidity of thought which he had naturally lost, made me feel that he was to be cautiously dealt with.

At the same time I think there had come a change in his sentiments towards me. Formerly he had loved me, in spite of himself, and meaning, if he could, for my own sake to give me up. Now he approached me as one who could no longer be injured by his love, and with that seriousness which makes so many men hesitate when they actually calculate marriage with its grave and comprehensive duties. His love, whom he meant to adore and part from, might play with and rule him; but she, who was to be his wife, must be his subordinate. I felt this; but it only increased my affection for him, and yet all the time I could but feed my fancy with what he had said in days gone by; for no word of love had he actually spoken since we met again, only that, in his quiet authoritative way, he seemed to show not that, as in

former times, he belonged to me, but that I belonged to him. If he needed any little service he, as a rule, applied to me, and found me always blushing and ready—too ready, perhaps. But then he had won me, and I could not let him go. I did not need him to say pretty things; but I did need him to want my presence and my help. I wish very distinctly to mark this change in him and in myself, because it will explain very much of our after conduct to each other.

Perfect and open confidence between man and wife is one of the dreams of a woman's heart, and very happy is she who sees it accomplished. But I do not think it often exists, and perhaps it would be best if love, as a rule, expected less and forgave more, for in spite of the intimate relations of married life, our individuality remains and is never entirely merged the one in the other. He who has spoken of Himself as a jealous God has reserved to Himself alone that perfect

knowledge of the heart which we vainly seek to obtain, doubtless in mercy, knowing that we could not possess even such a measure of His omniscience and live, and in its place He has given us an easier duty, if we could but see it. He who is grieved every day by His knowledge of our hearts, has graciously spared us such knowledge, and in its place has bidden us to "think no evil; endure all in love, hoping and believing to the last." Through much darkness I came at length to see the light of this great truth, to know that, struggle against it as we will, the yoke laid upon us is easy, if we could but see it, and that the path of obedience to these high maxims is really the path of peace.

But why should I think of this just now; the time of which I have been speaking, though it worked a gradual change in us, was very happy. We all loved and trusted Brice —trusted him with a confidence which must have been very trying to him, but he never

presumed upon it more than by the attainment of an easy ascendancy over our minds, which we seemed rather to give him than to allow him to acquire. It was a very happy time, and under its influence we all seemed gradually to rally: Brice in his quiet way had thought for us all, and his dutiful attentions to mamma cheered her more that anything else, particularly as she had now a little drama to watch, and one in which she took intense interest.

In this manner the winter came upon us, and my seat upon the wall where of late I had gone to dream happy dreams, was abandoned for a corner of the little sitting-room, where I dreamed on still—dreamed of Brice and of the time when he should tell me he loved me and ask me to be his wife. I was not impatient of the time, but I expected it almost daily throughout that winter. I thought it would be very pleasant when we two might go out walking together and enjoy

that perfect confidence which I longed for, but could not have now. However, he seemed in no hurry for such privileges, and was content to live upon that border land of love which, after all, perhaps, is the most pleasant and certainly the least exacting part of courtship.

By Christmas the partnership between Brice and my father was commenced, and he had thrown in his lot with ours. The calmness of his spirit, never over hopeful, and never sinking into despair, was at this time peculiarly valuable. To my father, who had been master of a large commercial house—one of the City Principalities—it would have been very hard to begin all over again at the other and lowest end of trade with small ventures and cautious investments had it not been for the clear, steady, healthful spirit of his young partner, who took all the disagreeables and thought nothing poor or mean which was not wicked.

My father had learned how to be rich, and to be rich means very often to be in the bonds of conventionality; but encouraged by Brice he again shook off the trammels of his lost wealth, and poor and honest in his new and yet old character set to work with boyish freshness. Dear father, spirits like yours use misfortune only as a crucible; through which you came more bright and pure, more patient and true. Often now when I sit in the twilight, thinking of the past, the tears dim my eyes as I remember your simple cheerfulness at this time of trial, and your liberality with your few pence or shillings; you whose charitable subscriptions had once been so princely, that they had kept you amongst your own princes comparatively poor.

But at all events, he was once more on the high road to commercial prosperity, and Lucy and I began to hold up our heads a little higher, and to venture—though we were as poor as ever, for as yet the partnership was

working with much small outlay and little return—to assert ourselves in a quiet way.

We no longer received the visits of our gentle district visitor with shyness and reserve, but ventured to meet her advances. She had found us out to be her equals, and with hasty generosity had accepted us as such long before we would return or accept her civilities. She had made us known to Mr. Courtly, our clergyman, and he had called, after making, I suspect, many private enquiries about us, and had shewn us much attention. He was very kind to Lucy, and was a little struck I think by finding such a sweet and elegant creature in such a humble setting ; and he had persuaded her to take upon herself little duties in the village, such as reading to certain selected sick people, for she would not become a regular visitor. Brice entered into this with great interest, and always on a Sunday brought down what he called some of his tythes for Lucy's sick people.

So by degrees we began to rise to some standing in the place. Miss Moore's mother came regularly to call on mamma, and once or twice during the winter we went there to tea, and had them back to tea with us. Very soon they seemed to forget what a poor place we lived in, and to treat our one little maid with becoming respect as marking our position in society. When upon occasions Brice came down with his well fitting coat, and Aunt Bona made her appearance with her fashionable cap, it was quite accepted that we belonged to the world.

It must be remembered that save and except Lucy's sorrows, we had nothing to regret but money, and that we still had enough of that to keep us from starving, and that our spirits were good, and we never talked of those gloomy better days which some people are always despondently casting in their neighbour's teeth; and I daresay we were rather an acquisition than otherwise to Hay-

side, especially as mamma enforced her axiom of give and take with cheerfulness.

"You patronised once," she would say, "now it is your turn to be patronised; see that you accept it with grace, gratitude, and cheerfulness. Depend upon it," she would add, in her easy comfortable manner, "the poor in purse are too often the proud in spirit—and that is not well; let them learn the lessons of poverty before they seek for riches. We are taking the poor lesson last, but we will learn it for all that, my dears—and learn it well, too; it was not sent for nothing, you may be very sure of that."

It must not be supposed that Aunt Bona had changed to us on account of our poverty. She would willingly, I believe, have shared her slender income with us, but that upon this subject papa was stern and inflexible. She was forced, therefore, to be contented with coming to see us sometimes, when she always managed to bring a basket of good

things. Her invitations to us were many, but we would not accept them.

"Let us recover from our wounds first," I would say, "before we venture into our old world."

"My dear child," she would reply, "they all feel for you."

"I know they do," I said, "and I feel grateful to them, but Lucy could not bear it. Here we have found a new world—so close to our old one, too—where people know us and do not pity—rather admire—the knowledge of the world they know us to possess. But you mistake if you think you may not do us a kindness. When you come down to see us and bring your last new cap, and your most becoming dress, you create quite an impression on our new friends, and add greatly to our social standing here, shewing them that you know all our virtues, and balance them against our mean sitting-room and tiny cottage. You are, I assure you, dear Aunt Bona, quite a star of superior magnitude."

This tone of argument really comforted her, for Aunt Bona loved society and valued it in all its phases, and the thought that she really was adding to our social position in the little set to which we belonged, brought her down to eat our tea cakes in high good humour. Indeed, I have sometimes known her decline quite grand parties, where she would have been a nobody, in order that she might shine upon our lower sphere.

I like to look back upon this winter. We seemed at this time to be so real and so free from pretence and sham, at the same time that Brice's coming shed a radiance over everything. He was always kind, and his words gave room for pleasant thoughts and guesses about those feelings which he still persisted in keeping partly out of sight. With all his kindness, however, the power he had of holding me in awe when he pleased, of forcing me to be silent when he did not choose to talk, went on increasing, and I

sometimes wonder now that in those days of perfect freedom it did not lessen my love for him. But it did not; I liked to feel that he was superior to myself, and I put him up upon a height above me, and made of him an idol, before whom it was pleasant to humble myself. This did neither myself nor him any good, but I did not see it at that time.

CHAPTER XVI.

Is it of war Lord Ronald speaks?
The blush that dyes his manly cheeks,
The timid look and downcast eye,
And faltering voice the theme deny.

SCOTT.

Love is native to the heart;
Guide its wishes as you will,
Without love you'll find it still
Void in one essential part.

AKENSIDE.

CHAPTER XVI.

In this way passed the winter, which was, to our consolation, as warm in our crowded little cottage as in our former Clapham mansion, heated with the best apparatus which could be procured, for our little sitting-room had always its small bright fire, and when that became wearisome and we needed change, we could seek it in the kitchen. For though Bessy was such a great acquisition—and indeed, she grew to be more polished every week—it was very difficult to keep up any great class distinctions in such a small

domain as ours, although there must be always a difference between those who pay and those who receive wages.

The spring crept slowly on, the white frosts became less frequent, and the sun more warm, and east winds gave way to mild westerly breezes, and my old seat upon the wall became bearable again. The time of fruit and flowers drew near; but something which I cared for still more had gone on growing and ripening with the flowers, I knew. I felt, that though never again I should be what I had been to Brice, his love for me had grown with his business life, and that without me that business—although I seemed to have so little to do with it—would lose half its charm.

The time was coming for him to speak; I saw it in his eyes, and the knowledge came to me with the increased tenderness in his voice.

I was sitting in my old place upon the

wall one early summer day, as the afternoon grew into evening, and he was standing by me, thinking silently, as it was much his habit to do, and looking at the cow, who whatever her private history might have been, seemed just the same as in the summer before.

He was so long silent, that I had time to admire him, as I was much in the habit of doing, and to remark with satisfaction how broad in the chest he had grown, and how strong his arms were in their perfect rest; then he turned full upon me and caught me in the act.

"Well," he said, a little roguishly, "are you satisfied with me; you look as if you had been taking an inventory."

I slouched my hat a little lower over my eyes, looked foolish, and tried to find something to cover my embarrassment.

"You are very patient and good with my silent humours," he said, in a changed tone.

"You must find them a sad bore sometimes."

"You never bore me," I replied, eagerly, for I knew that I would rather have him silent by the hour than go away.

"Is that really so?" he said. "I feared I had become too much of a plain business man to please you."

"I never said so," I answered, my lips trembling a little, and we fell into another silence, which I determined he should break. So I went on with my work, and though I knew he was not looking at the cow all the time, I would not lift up my eyes to meet his.

"Alice," he said at last, for he had come in these days of our closer intimacy to call me sometimes by my name.

I looked up, and saw that his face had that radiance in it which was always better to me than a smile.

"I want you," he went on, "to teach me something."

"Willingly," I said, laying down my work, and looking at his fingers, perhaps with some vague notion that he wanted to learn how to net or crochet.

"Then," he said, "teach me how to make love."

Now this was very stupid of Brice, and I felt inclined to be very angry with him, for having nothing better to say than that; so I answered, coolly enough,

"Men always know how to do that for themselves, and when you wish to do so, you will easily find the words."

"Then I will try, since you throw me on my own resources, but—" here he laid his hand upon mine, and sent a thrill through me, as if his had been charged with electricity; and now he looked straight into my eyes, as if he would reach if he could the very innermost depths of my soul, and I forgot to blame him, and felt to the utmost the serious position in which we stood to one

another, "but mine shall be said in few words. Can you trust yourself to me, Alice; to me, a plain silent fellow, engrossed in business—business which he first took up out of love for you and yours. I have almost lost the power to woo you as I might have done had I been a rich man a few months ago, but you need no telling to be sure I love you ten times better than I ever did."

At all culminating points of our existence, perhaps there comes to us a sense of disappointment and imperfection. I do not know what I expected, though I had been foolish enough to go over the scene in which I was now playing a real part many times, but in fancy I think Brice had said more, dear fellow, than he was saying now, I think too in fancy he had said it better, for he spoke, he, who always when he did speak, spoke so well, brokenly. These thoughts made me silent, but silence is perhaps woman's part, and as my eyes fell to cover the shadow

which rested in them, Brice was I think quite contented.

"You believe me," he said, earnestly, "and if you are the good girl I take you for, you—" he hesitated here, he was going to say: "you love me," but his better taste prevailed, and he added: "You will be kind and candid with me."

I let my face fall upon my hands and his, for he still held mine, and the tears came thick and fast. Why, I cried, I scarcely know, except that his manliness touched me, and I knew or fancied that he also felt that he touched upon the summit of all human happiness, and found even in the first moments how far it fell short of perfection, that when we should have been hero and heroine we were but plain man and woman. Perhaps I read him as we all read our neighbours, by myself, and read him wrongly, and that in the simplicity of his love, he would

have been surprised and offended by the most enthusiastic expressions of affection.

These are not really the moments of passion, and they should be too solemn for romance. He let me cry on, waiting my time in his calm and silent way, though the hand which still held mine, and which I was bedewing with my tears, conveyed by its pressure no uncertain feeling.

It must be remembered that we were doing our love making on the wall, which though it was solitary enough, was at any moment subject to interruption, but had it not been so, I do not think Brice at this time would have been less outwardly calm than he was, though the prince of my dreams would, I think, have fallen upon his knees or done something else eminently absurd.

"It is a plain and simple compact into which I wish you to enter," he said, at last, when I seemed to have come to an end of

my tears and further silence was becoming awkward, "and if you have the slightest reluctance or think you could do better for yourself than by marrying so poor a man as I am, Heaven forbid that I should press you against your will!"

"I would rather marry you than the richest man on earth," I exclaimed excitedly, "and I will wait for you any number of years."

"Nay!" he said, with a smile, which shewed rather a quiet sense of power than any vanity or triumph. "That is exactly what I do not want. I always strike while the iron is hot, and I mean to have you now. I have seen how patiently and cheerfully you can bear poverty, and you will not be poorer with me than with your father. Long ago I made it the condition of our partnership that I might speak to you when I liked, and do you know I think we shall love each other better if we begin the world and fight out the battle together."

Having passed the summit of bliss and found it a little disappointing, I had now time to realize the prospect before me, and looking down from my superior position on the wall, I felt convinced that my lot in life was a very happy one. This was a man who stood before me, a man every inch of him, and although he scorned to utter a flattering or exaggerated word, I could feel that his heart was moved to its very depths.

"You have taken our troubles too heavily upon you," I said, moved with tenderness to see how serious his young face had become. "You have grown so much older in the last few months."

"Have I?" he answered, "and forgotten the pretty things I ought to have at my tongue's end; perhaps that is why I abridge my courtship. You will put up with more in a husband than you would in a lover, and expect less from him."

"Never from you, never less from you," I

said, moved with sudden passion, which startled, but I think did not displease him. "You must learn to love me better, and better, and better every year. You do not know what a jealous creature I am."

"Are you jealous?" he said, opening his large blue eyes still wider. "I did not know that before, but it does not matter."

"Oh! it does matter," I cried, with an impulse I could not resist, and taking advantage of what seemed a moment of perfect confidence, "if you do not mean to be tender and gentle to this fault of mine, better leave me now, leave me!" I added, with childish pathos, "and go your way and forget me."

"I will not," he answered, simply, "because I cannot. I have no more power to leave you and go my way alone than you have if you love me to be happy without me. I am quite contented to take you as you are with your faults, but for your own sake it would be wiser to correct them. Only think,

Ally," adopting the pet name they called me by at home, "how ridiculous it would be to be jealous of such a plain simple fellow as I am, who is never likely to give you a moment's cause for it. Why, except with you I never flirted in my life, and as for business, I hope you will not be jealous if I think it my duty to like that for your sake as well as my own."

"Oh! no," I replied, "not of that certainly, unless you quite forget to say a pretty thing now and then."

"Do not expect too much," he answered, "and be contented to take me on trust. Any way your duties will soon begin, and as you see I cannot say a pretty thing even when I am asked for one, I think I was wise to make our courtship as short as I could."

I did not ask him what he meant, I understood it to be a kind of apology for not speaking out at the beginning of the winter, and my thoughts were all in confusion. It was

so delightful to have him talking so candidly with me, and I resolved that if possible, and now that he was all my own, I never would be afraid again.

Then I demurely descended from my place on the wall. There was no cause to say with Hannah More's heroine. "My father, sir, my mother," for he had told me that long ago he had obtained my father's consent; still, they ought to be told, and in the dim twilight, which had settled down upon our long talk, I took my way to the house, followed by Brice —for, as I have said before, the path was too narrow for two to walk on together. Before he reached the door, he called me by my name, and I turned back shyly to face him.

"You do not repent ?" he said, almost solemnly.

"Oh ! no," I answered.

"Then, remember," he said, "from this time we have thrown in our lots together for weal or woe."

CHAPTER XVII.

I heard a damsel singing to herself,
And soon espied her, coming all alone,
In her first beauty. Up a path she came,
Leafy and intricate, singing her song,
A song of love, by snatches; breaking off
If but a flower, an insect in the sun
Pleased for an instant; then as carelessly
The strain resuming.

ROGERS.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was a very quiet scene of homely domestic gladness that we took part in that night. I remember that I left Brice with papa, and went up to mamma and Lucy, and in a very subdued manner, told them of my happiness.

"Of course," I said, "it will be a very long time before I have to leave you."

"I do not know that," said mamma, with a smile; "he has already taken a house."

I felt a little dismayed at this, for I knew Lucy would miss me, and I could not bear

the thought of parting with her; but she made light of it.

"We have expected this so long, dear," she said, "that, of course, I am prepared to lose you; and you forget how many new interests your marriage will give me. It will be a great thing to have a real brother, you know."

"And for me to find a son?" said mamma; and she looked really so triumphant at the thought, that I was quite comforted on their account. "I cannot say now," she continued, "that we can make the fortune of our son-in-law; but it is almost as good that he is going to make ours."

From the tone in which she spoke, I could guess that she was in better spirits about business concerns, and with her elastic temperament, was really looking forward to the recovery of our fortunes.

When we had had a long talk, I begged them to go down, and I would follow.

That which I experienced most, perhaps, in our little cottage, was the need of privacy; and I felt that upon the very eve of a new life —which was as new to me in reality as if I had not been imagining it all the winter—I wanted some repose of thought—some opportunity of gathering my faculties together—time for offering up my poor imperfect words of thanksgiving for the great mercy which had been vouchsafed to me. My head felt dizzy, and my situation was altogether strange. Already my life—my very self—was becoming merged into that of another, who was drawing me to him by strong and irresistible bonds. I went down presently, feeling very shy and subdued, and coming into the room, saw one of the signs of my having passed out of my own control. There was the very slightest appearance of impatience in Brice's eyes, which vanished, however, directly they met mine. There was, too, an empty chair by him, across which his

arm was thrown as if to guard it. This chair was for me. Henceforth, even in his love, he was to be master. I felt it as I took the chair by him, blushing to see that for the first time the arm which lay across the back of it was not removed. I took my tea, and played with my tea-spoon, feeling that my new master was watching every movement.

"I was speaking," he said, addressing me; but very vainly trying to catch my eyes, "of my new house."

"Ye—es," I murmured.

"I have been fortunate enough to meet with a cottage within the boundary of the quiet neighbourhood of Kensington, which is within my means. I have entered upon it already, and I sleep there for the present in hermit style."

"I should think your lodgings would be more comfortable," I said.

"Ah! but it was such a chance; if I had let this house go, I might not have secured

another so cheaply for an age; and I have heard you say that you liked the Old Court Suburb better than any part of London."

He had meant what he said then, that his courtship should be short, and mamma was right, he had actually taken his house. Apart from any thoughts of myself, I felt glad at these signs of a recovery in the prospects of the new firm for my dear father's sake, and I said what I thought.

"Then you are both really getting on?"

"Of course we are," said papa; "but mamma thinks it would not be wise for us to encumber ourselves with a move just yet. This dear fellow," and he laid his hand on Brice's shoulder, "has taken up a tangled thread here, and tied a broken one there, until I find that my affairs are really in not half the mess they seemed. Whilst the immediate break down of our establishment—which you all so wisely concurred in—gave every opportunity for me to recover myself

if it were possible. But I could not have done it without him. I lost head, and many a man is drowned who could swim from doing that. You owe everything to his young brains. If I ever get out of the mire, as I hope to do, it will be because he picked me out."

Lucy put her hand across the table to Brice.

"After that I think," she said, "we can trust you with what is more precious to us than our goods."

"Only," he said, laughing, as he shook her hand heartily, "she is more puzzling and difficult to deal with than the most tangled accounts. She has been crying like the rain, poor child, at the very thought of having to consort with me for life, and yet she professes not really to mind it."

I rose from my seat; my nerves I found had been overwrought. I must go and recover; but a strong hand was laid on mine, and I felt myself held back. My master

would not let me run away then, and I sat down again; but Brice tried his power within safe limits. After a few minutes he rose himself, and bade us good-night.

He took my hand in his strong palm, pressed it, hesitated, and then stooping, kissed me simply and seriously.

I loved him better for the solemnity with which he did it—it was like setting a seal upon a contract.

"My darling," said my father to me that night, "you have made me very happy; you have given to me what I have so long desired —a son, in whom I can entirely trust."

All this made me very glad, and when I laid my giddy, bewildered head upon my pillow that night, it was with a strange sense of joy, which I fondly thought must last for ever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Elsie. What bells are those that ring so slow,
So mellow, musical, and low?

Prince Henry. They are the bells of Geisenheim,
That with their melancholy chime
Ring out the curfew of the sun.

Elsie Listen beloved
* * * * * *
Their voices only speak to me
Of peace and deep tranquillity,
And endless confidence in thee.

LONGFELLOW.

CHAPTER XVIII.

When I opened my eyes the next morning there came to me a strong sense of responsibility, and at the same time a fear that I was wanting in my affection to Lucy, who had been so ill-used, and who would be so lonely when I went away. I loved her dearly, and I had ever been devoted in my affection to my parents; and yet, now it was all Brice. He had marched, as it were, into the citadel of my heart, and taken possession. It seemed at first like doing an injury to the dear friends and counsellors of my youth that he should

be all in all, but I fear these feelings were dissipated by breakfast time; for when I came down, and had been kissed with something more than the usual measure of affection which was so lavished upon me, I saw upon my plate a letter for me. I had few correspondents now—indeed, I never had been much of a writer—and the very sight of a letter was a treat; but this one was from Brice. He had sat up late to write to me, it seemed, when he got home; and in this letter he poured out some of the thoughts and feelings of his heart, which he was so much in the habit of repressing. He told me how much he loved me, how satisfied he was with my kindness to him, so he put it, and added how miserable it would make him if he ever found that I repented of my choice. "Even now," he wrote, "I feel bound to tell you, in all candour, that your father's affairs are likely to right themselves, and instead of my having made a sacrifice for him I am likely greatly to

benefit by our partnership. Were it not on your account, and that he might fairly consider it as a kind of dowry to his child, I should feel myself called upon to give up to him the advantages which I have thus obtained. But I speak of it now to shew you that in a little while you are likely to obtain, if not the same wealth as heretofore, yet such a fair portion of this world's goods as might lead you perhaps to look higher than myself. Therefore, it is that I put before you the possible alternative, and think it my duty to tell you that nothing must make you confirm your choice, but such a real and substantial affection for myself as can take me for myself alone, independently of my surroundings. If you have this real affection for me, you will never, I think, regret whatever cares or troubles may be in store for us—your having thrown in your lot with mine."

I am quoting from the letter, which still lies in my desk, yellow with time; it was

very valuable to me. This was my first letter, and I have never parted with it. I had often wondered what lovers could possibly find to write about so often,—what complications must arise I thought before such repeated explanations could be necessary. Yet here I was, sitting down to write a long letter to the friend from whom I had parted but a few hours before,—doing so too as if it was the most natural thing in the world. I told him then that I was very glad, for all our sakes, to hear what he told me, but that it never could make any difference in my feelings to him ; that if I were very rich and he were very poor, I should ever feel that his choice did me honour, and be proud to think that he believed me worthy of his confidence; and I added that I should be very glad to see him whenever he had time and cared to come to see us.

He found time that very night ; and when he came first into the room I saw at a glance that it was the Brice of older days who had

come back to me; not the plain, business man, as he had called himself, who for many weary months had worked night and day to extricate my father's affairs, but the young, fresh lover of my earlier choice. I had not expected this. I had learned to like him in any mood, to be watchful of his humours and patient of his silence, and in doing so had grown steady and thoughtful myself, and I had not expected this great pleasure.

He came forward with both hands extended to grasp mine. To him, too, it was delightful to see how the full knowledge and security of his affection had brought back the joyfulness of my youth: it gave me back my triumphant sense of his love at the same time that it left me cautiously mindful of his change of mood.

"I am come to ask you to go for a walk," he said, with his old eagerness of manner; "we need not bore them too much, need we?"

"You will not bore them, Brice. Do you not know that as a son and a brother you are looked upon as a very rare article, and that you belong a great deal more to them than to me?"

"Do I!" he replied, laughing; "that is a capital arrangement. Go and put on your bonnet like a dear, or this beautiful summer evening will be gone."

I soon returned, dressed for our walk, and we strolled out together along the pleasant lanes, feeling a new sense of happiness in the thought that Brice had recovered his youth. He laughed and chatted so happily—indeed, anything seemed to amuse, any little foolish nonsense of mine seemed sense enough for him that night.

We did not care to analyse our happiness—indeed we quite forgot to play hero and heroine, and were in our new joy almost a boy and girl again.

As we were turning towards home, the

merry bells of our church began to ring, and the summer air wafted the sound to us, and then carried it away only to fling it back again with a loud joyous peel right over our heads. And yet ever in their sweet music, there seemed to me then as now to be a hidden wail over the vanity of human happiness, a keen sympathy, which sets their tones so in unison with our broken hopes and expectations; and yet, in spite of the sadness which ever mingles with their most joyous bursts, there is within them a tone of Heaven which, as their music dies away upon the breeze, bears us with it to immortal lands.

Stopping to listen, these thoughts came full upon me, and moved me almost to tears as I spoke of their effect upon me to Brice.

"Ah!" he said, "my love, it is given to you to have a more delicate perception of the inner life of things than I have. These fancies are very pretty, but perhaps not altogether suited to my nature. To me bells are

bells, and to-night they lead me to very different conclusions. Shall I tell you now what they speak of to me?"

"Pray do, you unromantic thing," I said, "I should like of all things to know what the bells can have to say to such a matter of fact individual."

"Well, then, they say to me, 'Here we are, waiting for you; make haste and come. You have a house; furnish it quickly, and take your wife home. There is nothing in all the world like the sweet domestic life we usher in and ring about; and when we have nothing else to do, like to-night, we ring about the happy weddings we have seen.'"

"They are very cunning bells," I said; "but they never talk to me like that—never."

"Do they not? then that I fear is because you do not listen the right way. In my matter of fact manner, you see, I take things just as I find them. And so the bells speak pleasant things to me. Remember, love, that

with your finer and more highly-wrought temperament, you will, perhaps, have to deal with equally subtle temptations. To me the tables of the Ten Commandments speak of my plain course of what to do and what to avoid; but to you these will seem but coarse and broad distinctions; and you will have to fight with shadows; you will be tempted, too, by shadows, and, poor child, yours, after all, will be the harder trial, for I shall not be able to help you. I cannot follow you into your shadow-land; I cannot help you to fight your enemies, for I shall not even be able to see them. I pity you, because your delicate nature must necessarily be so much alone."

"I cannot be alone while you understand me like this," I said.

"Ah! but," he replied laughing, "when I am working in the work-a-day world, I shall not gain a glimpse of the shadow-land which, under the influence of this sweet sum-

mer night and you, I perhaps, even now, only dimly discern."

"If you tried," I said, earnestly, "you would see my temptations then as well as now."

"I think not," he said, very seriously. "Mine is a stronger, but a ruder and coarser nature. It is not given me to see the shadows. You know, when you want me to understand you, you must come out into the light."

"I do not think you quite understand yourself," I said.

"Perhaps not. With some to love is to begin to live; but then I have loved you a long time, though not as I do now. I could have parted from you once, and have torn my hair for six weeks, and then got over it."

"And now?" I answered, secure in my power over my strong companion.

"Well, now, I fear it would be a very different matter. Perhaps I might go out of my own daylight into your shadow-land."

"I almost wish you could. I wish you could thoroughly understand me, Brice. You know what a weak creature I am."

"No, I do not know that, except, perhaps, in your bodily shape; and you are small enough for me to crush altogether in my arms. I believe I could kill you with my embrace, if I tried, like a great surly bear, as I sometimes am."

"I will remember that," I replied, laughing, "and will carefully keep out of your reach."

"Will you?" he said, and his countenance shone with that love, which seemed that night to be brimming over.

"I did not mean that I was bodily weak," I said, "at all, because I am particularly strong, and scarcely remember a day's illness; but in feeling I am very weak and given to idle jealousies; and, curiously enough, I think you make me weaker."

"You are certainly complimentary."

"I did not mean by yourself," I returned, with a little impatience to see that I could not be understood; "but in placing my affections in your keeping, by caring for you so very much, I seem to have rendered myself vulnerable to so many ills, shadowy as well as real, to be drawn down to earth, rather than carried up to heaven, and to have so many strong influences exerted over me."

"There is no doubt," he answered, "that an engagement such as ours is too absorbing in its nature to be altogether healthy, and yet it is natural; and I would hope it is without sin. It shall not, if I can help it, make us forget the interests or well being of others."

"No," I thought, "it would not hurt him. The curse of such love lay upon us, not upon men. Was it not part of the curse upon woman that 'her desire should be to her husband, and that he should rule over her.' He who rules is not dragged to and fro at the

will of another. But side by side with the surrender of our will I think Satan walks in, to rejoice in his old victory over weak woman, and to throw around her the glamour of his evil influence."

I can fancy now how shocked my lover would have been if I had given expression to these strange thoughts; and yet even now it appears there was truth in them. The secret of many an unhappy home, the key to many a wayward woman's temper is really to be traced to the shadow land, where the great tempter is watching for her soul.

We think ourselves so strong, so docile, so straightforward. We love, and we find ourselves weak, wilful, contradictory, fractious.

Brice broke in upon my thoughts, by whispering, in answer to my troubled looks,

"Better come out into my daylight. It has not such poetic dreams, perhaps, but it is more healthy, and in it we see things without mistaking their proportions."

"I do not think I shall ever mistake you Brice, dear," I said, in a tone of confidence, as I took his arm, and turned homewards, for we had been standing, leaning upon a gate all this while, just where we could see our church, amongst the trees, distant enough to give full effect to its sweet peal of bells.

CHAPTER XIX.

No other voice, no other voice,
  Can charm me half so well,
As those soft whispered tones that fall
  From whom I will not tell.
When stealing thro' the shady grove,
  He pleads his love for me,
Not all the feathered songsters notes
  Have half the melody.

No other voice, no other voice,
  I hear, when breathed so low,
As thro' the verdant glade we stray
  With footsteps ever slow.
Unheeded twilight shadows fall,
  And stars begin to shine,
When whispering zephyrs 'midst the leaves
  But mock that voice of mine.

CHRISTY MINSTRELS.

CHAPTER XIX.

I have ventured to say so much about our courtship, because I think that it is in itself a temptation, and we are induced by it to think a great deal too much about ourselves. Every little note which passes from one to the other, and which causes a smile upon the face of the looker-on, is in reality but part of the analysis of our hearts and feelings, which is needful to make that bond which is the closest which can exist in the world, but which is at the same time unhealthy. The closer that bond is drawn, the more perfect

our confidence, the more intimate our relation, so much is increased the happiness of married life, but we might as well believe that the evening shadow correctly tells our proportions, as reckon upon the exaggerated estimate we form of each other in the happy but unreal days of courtship.

Perhaps it was for this reason, and because he being naturally of a sober disposition, wished to deliver himself from the bonds of a great passion; or, perhaps, because he had purposely not spoken until the time when he wished to settle himself into the domestic life he so praised, that the term of our courtship was abridged as far as possible.

We had but had a few more walks amongst the lanes and dog roses, when he pressed for my early decision, and made me consent to have the banns published in the church which had told him such pleasant tales through the bells. I had decided that as economy was our great object in those days,

and second only, if indeed it was second to comfort, he should furnish only four rooms in the cottage he had taken at Kensington, and that the rest should follow at our leisure.

"Let us have two chairs and a table only at first," I said, "and then I can have plenty to amuse me in furnishing during your long absences, and we can go and buy in the evenings; only remember this," I added, solemnly, "if we live on bread and water, we live within our means."

"Do not keep me upon it too long," he replied, with some amusement, "for such a strong fellow as I am requires a great deal of keeping up."

"Nothing reduces your strength, sir, be sure of that, like living beyond your means; but I will make your money go as far as I can in mutton chops, if your strength is of such a very evanescent nature that you cannot bear the least bit of fasting."

"Your shadow land," he answered, "may

suit fasting, but my day light requires a sufficient supply of butcher's meat."

"You shall have it if you can afford it," I said, peremptorily, "but not if you cannot, even if your strong bones stick out of their skin; so you know what you have to expect, and if you cannot put up with such treatment, you had better keep a little longer to your bachelor dining houses."

But Brice would not hear of this alternative; he could put up with anything for the blessing of my presence of course, and live off cheese-rind if I so thought best; and so it was of no use to represent our future housekeeping under the most dreary aspect. I threw in a dark perspective of a worn-out wife in shabby dresses and old-fashioned bonnets, but he only laughed at this objection.

"You have learned to master all those difficulties," he said, "and though you did give way in the matter of dress at first, you

look almost as well in that grey suit which I should think cost about a shilling a yard, as you used to do in your dress of azure blue gauze, with which you formerly set my heart palpitating."

"And how do you know I gave way in the matter of dress," I asked, curiously, "did papa complain and tell tales out of school?"

"Not he, he suffered all his grievances like a fine old gentleman as he is; if you had gone in sackcloth and ashes he would not have told—Miss Moore was my informant, she was giving me the other day a touching narrative of her observations, of how you seemed so brave at first, then that your spirits began to die and your costume to grow old and unbecoming, and then how suddenly you seemed to rouse yourself and to cast off the evil dream which had oppressed you, with a strength of mind which surprised her."

"Do not believe her, Brice, there was no

strength of mind in the matter," I replied, "it was you that brought back the brightness to my life, to my clothes, to my very hair; I had believed the world all cold, fickle, and cruel, but the very sight of your face restored my faith in it."

Brice laughed; "I told her," he said, "that I had never seen the despairing appearance she mentioned."

"I did give way," I said, "I confess it to my shame; but, Brice——" here I felt the tears filling my eyes, "you were so long in coming, and it was very hard to believe that you were cold and forgetful like the rest."

"Was it for me then that you were grieving, darling, for a poor unworthy fellow like me? while I had not the courage to look upon your first sufferings, knowing that even to marry me was to bring you to a state which was wretched in comparison with that to which you had been accustomed. When

Miss Moore told me of this, I congratulated myself that you had not first passed through such a phase of mind in my house."

"You had not the courage," I said, "papa told me that you did not know where we lived."

"That was true, but do you not think I could easily have obtained the knowledge, had I not believed from what he said that my coming would be an inconvenience. Then I said to myself I must wait until I have a right and an excuse to force my way, I who had been used to poverty all my life, could yet faintly imagine how cruelly the iron would enter into your soul."

"You mistook me altogether," I said, eagerly, "to think that poverty could subdue me; you see I have tried it and I do not fear it, but if you are ever unkind to me, cease to love me, and make me jealous and wretched, then you will have the ugly shabby wife Miss Moore described to you."

"If we wait until then," he answered, laughingly, "I am quite content. What a foolish darling you are to think of being jealous of me, you are much more likely to be tired of my sobriety. But seriously, how can you fear such an unworthy and senseless passion as jealousy? for myself I cannot help despising it heartily."

Oh, Brice, what unfortunate words those were of yours, how often, and how often in the days to come did I remember them, and the glowing cheek with which he went on to say—

"Jealousy so lowers the mind, weakens its powers, blinds its sight, and really makes the person who entertains the passion so unworthy and despicable, that I would not for the world associate it with you; and I think when you consider how contrary it is to the sentiments of true Christianity, you will acknowledge that you are accusing yourself wrongfully."

"I hope so, indeed," I said, catching something of his enthusiasm, and feeling in that moment how impossible it would be to mistrust the noble fellow who walked by my side and spoke as if so strong in conscious rectitude. At this time my heart was full of trust and confidence; had I had the wealth of the Indies, I would have given it to him and asked for no security beyond his word, and if in the time future I came greatly to err, I cannot even now hold him as altogether blameless. But at this time there was no shadow upon our happiness — no cloud however small upon our "great Heaven of blue."

CHAPTER XX.

A feeble world, whose hot-mouthed pleasures tire
Before the race; before the start, retreat;
A faithless world, whose false delights expire
Before the term of half their promised date:
A fickle world not worth the least desire,
Where ev'ry chance proclaims a change of state:
A feeble, faithless, fickle world wherein
Each motion proves a vice, and ev'ry act a sin.

QUARLES' EMBLEMS.

CHAPTER XX.

THE preparations for my wedding had gone busily forward—such humble preparations indeed as our circumstances permitted, when one evening I found myself alone with papa.

"There is one thing," I said, "which makes me a little anxious, papa, and I hope we have not done wrong in it."

"What is the matter, dear child?" he replied, with a tenderness which was ever in his voice when speaking to me.

"We have never asked Brice," I said, a little tremulously, "about his relations; and

in marrying him it may be against their consent. Has anything passed between you about them? For myself, I was wicked enough to forget them altogether, but I would not enter a family without their consent for worlds."

I added this with a little heat and over earnestness, considering that I had been until now so very little concerned about the matter.

My father looked serious; perhaps from my flushing cheek he argued the possibility of a misunderstanding between me and Brice, and nothing I think at this time would have vexed him more. He relied upon him, and trusted, while he gave way and stood a little in awe of him, for Brice had in him, as I have said, in spite of the exquisite kindness of his nature, those elements which make a man a leader, and by necessity one whose anger no one would care to rouse. That Brice could be very desperate if he were

roused, and be very fearful in his wrath, was I think a strong, though unacknowledged feeling with us all; and this feeling curiously enough was the stronger, because we had never once seen him really angry. Passionate men who break into a tempest once or twice a week, we learn how to manage, and as a rule, they are seldom feared. But Brice's temper was so sweetly kind, so untiringly patient, and his words so cautiously measured, so as not to wound, to censure, or to calumniate, that we could get no measure of what his wrath would be if it were once awakened. And yet we felt that there was a power within him which could protect from insult and preserve from injury.

It was not then much to be wondered at that papa should look towards me with uneasy glances; but he answered me directly and kindly—

"When," he said, "our partnership was first spoken of, or rather"—he corrected him-

self, for he, perhaps, in his engagement had acted as I had done in mine—" before it was signed, I asked him if he had better not consult with his own relatives; his answer was explicit, 'I have no relatives who have any right to influence my actions.' 'Still,' I persisted, 'in a matter like this they may have an interest which no others can feel, and may counsel you against the step you intend to take.'"

"'Circumstances,' he said, 'have left me entirely my own master and completely alone in the world. I have no one but myself to consult in any step I like to take.'"

"I asked him no further questions; there was something in his manner which brought the subject to an end at once, and though he paused long enough to avoid the slightest embarrassment on his part to appear, and to give ample time for me to speak further, I did not feel inclined to press it, and when he spoke again, it was upon a matter of busi-

ness which had no reference to it. After that I should not like to broach the subject again, unless you particularly wish it."

"Do you see any necessity for it?" I asked, a little tremulously.

"I do not; he says he has no near relations, so I understand, and if he does not wish to tell us about them being dead, as I conclude, I do not see why we should press him. I should not think the better of him if he were descended from royalty, nor the worse if he were born under a hedge. I look now as I always have done, to the man himself, and with him I am satisfied."

"My question," I interposed hastily, unwilling to seem to cast a reflection on the man I loved, "only related to the possibility of my intruding unbidden into his family."

"Of that I think you may feel quite easy," papa replied, in a relieved tone. "Never since I have known him has he in any way referred to his family; so that I take it for

granted that he has been for a long time quite independent, and as for that, I know that he is as well able to maintain you as I am, and will ever keep within bounds. So do not trouble yourself about that; I wish every girl had as good a husband in prospect."

With that he kissed me and bade me good night, and I went up to bed, too happy in my present, and glad in my future life, to trouble myself any further about a question which I told myself was no longer a concern of my conscience. My father, it must be remembered, was not a man of family, and we had never been taught to place any value on class distinctions. Indeed, if we had done so, Mr. Norton's behaviour to dear Lucy would effectually have cured me of them. If Brice had been a workhouse boy, I should not have cared; it was enough that he was every inch a gentleman—in manners and refinement—and more than gentleman-like in chivalrous feeling.

Thus much I said to myself before I dismissed the subject entirely from my mind, and set myself to discuss with Lucy the much more knotty difficulty as to how Meta could be accommodated in the tiny cottage when she should come to be present at my wedding. We had begun to feel shy of Meta; she had only been to see us once when her patroness was in town for a week, and then she had shewn us that she was ashamed to come.

She had driven down, but she carefully left the carriage at the entrance to the village, where she had made the coachman put up; and even he could not have been blinded to the reason which induced her to prefer walking, an exercise to which she was not much addicted; for the roads, on that particular day were sloshy in the extreme, and there was that small rain falling which is so hopeless and so wetting. It took all the time which should have been spent in affectionate intercourse, to make her dry, and I know the

whole visit fussed us a great deal; and though mamma said nothing, Lucy and I, in exchanging confidences, felt that Meta had grown above us, thought our arrangements odd, and seemed half to imply that she was made of different clay to ourselves, and that for her more refined nature comforts were needed which we were supposed not to care for.

Under these circumstances, the idea of Meta's coming was something awful to us, for neither Lucy nor I thought of asserting ourselves and resenting her view of things; and although I, the chief actor in the coming ceremonial, decided on a bed on the floor, the arrangement did not quite satisfy us.

It did seem a pity that Meta should be still further set against her home, by being compelled to sleep three in a room, and that so small a one.

"But considering the occasion," said Lucy, "she surely will not mind," with which

conclusion we contrived to console ourselves before we went to sleep. "And perhaps," added Lucy, drowsily, but hopefully, "she may come home, now that there is room for her."

CHAPTER XXI.

Reader, such very fools art thou and I:
False puffs of honour; the deceitful streams
Of wealth; the idle, vain, and empty dreams
Of pleasure, are our traffic, and ensnare
Our souls, the threefold subject of our care;
We toil for trash, we barter solid joys
For airy trifles, sell our Heav'n for toys;
We catch at barley-grains, whilst pearls stand by,
Despised; such very fools art thou and I.

QUARLES' EMBLEMS.

CHAPTER XXI.

META was to come only a few days before the wedding, and in spite of what had gone before, and the little fears we entertained that she would be wounded by the hardships of our life, we looked forward to seeing her with the greatest interest. We had felt the affair of the carriage at the time, but had forgotten it as soon as possible, and we dreaded the effect of the accommodation we had to offer her; but it was rather with a feeling as if we could help it, and with a very

sincere wish to hide from her the little self-denials we had been forced to undergo.

Brice smiled in his good-tempered fashion when I put this view of things before him; he did not attempt to alter my way of thinking, but promised rather to he sure to come down on the day of her arrival to do her honour.

I think the idea of seeing my sister, whom we all so sincerely loved, kept my thoughts from the anticipations of the great change which was coming upon my own life. Brice noticed this as we stood together in the garden watching for her coming.

"I think," he said, "it is for me to be jealous."

"Oh, no," I answered; "she is yours as well as mine, and I am sure you care for her as much as I do."

At this time I was straining my eyes towards the distant road, but he, I think, was content with a prospect much nearer home.

Oh! for the happy days when the heart is young, and courtship so sweet and fresh, like the sweet scent of violets. I could have defied all the world combined to shake my confidence in my fellow scholar in the art of loving. I was so proud, too, that my plain man of business, as he was fond of calling himself, could trifle now like a girl, and waste a whole long summer evening in little better than admiring me.

Meta did not bring the carriage this time; perhaps the excuse of her small travelling box might have been sufficient for her to decline the offer of her indulgent pátroness, whom she ruled with silken fetters and blandishments, although I afterwards learned that the carriage and servants were offered for my use if I would accept them. But as for that, Meta knew well I would not, and did not propose it at the time, for I should have felt, independently of any other reason, that to allow the tall footman to inspect our small

ménage would have been gall and bitterness to her.

Tall footmen, indeed, seemed to us at this time to be vanities, and I often moralised over their insufficiency to make our happiness, quite forgetting that my exaggerated estimate of our one maid was only part of the same vanity.

Meta arrived in a cab, evidently a carefully selected cab; and Brice and I met her at the garden gate. She was very glad to see us, but she touched the ground daintily, as if the narrow entrance owed her sweeping skirts some apology, and I felt a little awe creep over me, though she was my own sister whom I loved so dearly. She was very well dressed, not showily, but handsomely, and she herself looked very well; her hair was tossed backwards and forwards in a fashion which I had not seen, and which seemed very intricate, and I quite blushed and wondered when Brice having done the amiable, and seen her in, re-

turned as if he would detain me yet a little longer in the garden. I felt quite grateful to find that he was not as overcome with Meta's charms as I was, and the light, caressing hand which he laid upon the girlish folds of my simple hair restored me to myself, but only rewarding him with a gentle pressure of the hand, I followed Meta into the house, and when I found she had gone upstairs, I deserted him altogether and followed her.

I found her with mamma and Lucy, asking where she should put this, that, and the other of the handsome articles she was taking off, and it was evident she was come to play, not the second but the first part in the little drama.

Mamma took this very quietly and kindly, and with as much ease as if she were administering the hospitalities of her former mansion, found a place for everthing, and treated every article with the most delicate respect, putting the little flimsy bit of a

bonnet in her own room, and under peculiar care.

These matters being arranged, and Meta's elegant hair smoothed with a tasty hand, she consented to come with us down stairs to tea. We found Brice and papa pacing the bit of a path outside the garden gate in earnest converse, which I was always so glad to see. I had neglected Brice, but he had a way with him of never seeming neglected. You never found him moping and biting his nails in a corner, as I have seen some men do, looking as if the skies had discharged a black shower upon them, and left them as disconsolate as a barn-door fowl in the rain. Brice was too little intrusive of himself, too considerate of the feelings of others, and too willing to give way where other's comforts were concerned to make himself as disagreeable as some men do when they go courting. And really, now I am upon the subject, I cannot think why some men make themselves such wretches

when they are in love, such torments to themselves and to everybody about them, more especially to the girl whom they profess to love. For my part, I cannot help thinking that immersion once, or perhaps twice, in a nice green duck pond would do some of them a great deal of good, and bring them more to their senses than all the petting and indulgence in the world. Brice was certainly not of this sort. He was talking as pleasantly with papa, on their short quarter deck promenade, as if he did not care one bit whether I kept out of his sight one hour or two. But did he not, when I came softly up to them presently, and when my hand stole into his, he turned upon me such a radiant look of protecting kindness as drew me to him more effectually than any sulkings on his part could have done, and made me feel proud of the place I held in such a great manly disinterested heart as his.

We went into tea then, for I had gone out

to call them, and Brice took care not to make papa seem in the way, by lingering behind with me, but politely stood back to let me pass, and so followed us both indoors. It might, perhaps it did, cost him something to forego those few minutes of confidential sentiment which lovers prize so highly, but I am sure it was worth the sacrifice, and made papa very happy in his new son and the feeling that his exclusion from our converse was not necessary to our happiness.

Meta was already seated at tea, and she graciously made room for Brice to sit near her, but he adroitly managed to keep his usual seat next me, although he did so with careful politeness.

"Rather crowded, is it not?" said Meta, with a little laugh, "and very different to our drawing-room at Clapham. Let me see, papa, how long was the drawing-room?"

"When we next entertain our friends in it, we will measure!" said papa, with quiet

humour, which quite escaped Meta, who went on:

"I wish I knew exactly, I hate making mistakes, and Mrs. Mac Phinn was saying the other day she did not think it could be so many feet as I said, but I fancied it certainly was ten feet larger than hers."

"It might have been," said papa, quietly, "she lives in May Fair, and I daresay pays a higher rent for her smaller rooms than we for our larger ones at Clapham. Comfort and not fashion was always my idea."

"We never talk of Clapham," said Lucy, mildly. "Papa says people who have seen better days are such bores."

"Then," said Meta, "it is hard to see what you can have to talk of in this place."

"We are never much at a loss," said Brice, "but then perhaps we are not great talkers."

"Or perhaps," said mamma, "you and papa bring the great world with you home,

and if we would live with the living there is little time, fortunately, to dwell too much on the past. You have been very gay, Meta; you, too, must have much to tell us."

Of course she had. Meta had been to the last new Opera, and could tell its story, and the peculiar beauties of all its airs, when we had, I think, not even heard of the opera itself. At Clapham we had a box at the opera, and treating the thing as a matter of course, I do not think we should have cared to enter into details and talk so much about it as Meta did that night. The parties and breakfasts she spoke of too, were of a more fashionable kind than those to which we had been accustomed in our days of prosperity, and the *propria personæ* had more titles than we had ever dwelt much with at any time, Papa being so wisely reticent as to keep mostly with those who had been able to rise like himself. The feeling came irresistibly upon me that night, as too often before, that Meta

had done ill to part with us; the subjects in which we were interested were now too wide apart, and it was difficult, in spite of all the strong love we bore her, to bridge over our sympathies. She had, too, lost something very difficult to explain, perhaps it was that, she now held such an uncertain footing on what was once her natural standing place, that she was always making an effort to hide from others, perhaps also from herself, her own insecurity, and had thus produced affectation and self-assertion where formerly there had only been nature and ease.

I think we all tried hard not to feel it, and certainly we noticed it with deep regret, but we who had lost so little because we had preserved our reality, felt that she was somewhat wanting in that tone which marks really good society. I have seen and noticed the same thing since, in many people circumstanced in the same way, and always with regret or displeasure. It is enough, we simple ones of

the earth are apt to feel, that we should have to give way before those real differences of rank which hold a place in every civilized country, and which no Agrarian or sumptuary law has ever been able to destroy, but our self respect forbids us to accept pretenders at their own valuation. Poor Meta was now but a pretender to the wealth and position she had once so easily possessed, and this agreed but badly with us, who had been contented to set both aside and, to accept with open eyes the full and sober realities of our new life. Perhaps with all these feelings she was yet a little puzzled at the ways of Providence, which because she had become unreal, had seemed incomprehensible to her, she being surrounded by the mist of misapprehension, which dimmed her sight. For must it not have seemed strange to her that she, who had been dressing so well, assuming so much, and visiting people constantly, should return to find that the sister who had

been living the life she so thoroughly despised and rejected should yet have reached the summit of a woman's felicity, the crown of love which our gracious Queen has shewn she esteemed above her earthly dignities Poor Meta, she had wilfully taken her own way in spite of all our entreaties, and those who separate their roads which at first seem, it may be, to be so close together, soon find that every step renders it more difficult to join together again. Interests, sympathies, enjoyments, even duties, are so different to those who lead such different lives, and though our love was at this time great enough to have swept down all barriers and to have smoothed the most regged differences of opinion, yet I fear, nay I feel certain, that Meta's love and interest had slackened, and were wholly incompetent to the task.

END OF VOL. I.

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